

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION

Question No. 56

Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

In relation to ASIO's security assessment of refugees:

1. By how much has the number of asylum seekers appraised as security risked increased over the past year?
2. What is the average time-frame for the processing of ASIO security assessments?
3. Is this trend in the number of assessments ASIO is currently undertaking expected to continue?
4. Does ASIO agree with the assessment of the Commonwealth Audit Office that the agency lacks 30 per cent of the staff required to properly carry out checks?
5. If ASIO does agree with the Assessment of the Audit Office, will ASIO recommend to Government an increase of 30 per cent in its staffing resources?

The answers to the honourable senator's questions are as follows:

1. In 2010-11, 35 adverse security assessments and 13 qualified security assessments were provided to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in relation to protection visa applications. In 2011-12, 22 adverse security assessments and 12 qualified security assessments were provided to DIAC in relation to protection visa applications.
2. Since implementation of ASIO's security triaging framework in April 2011, ASIO has completed about 75 per cent of Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMA) security assessments in less than two weeks.
3. The number of assessments conducted by ASIO is influenced by a range of factors including government policy and DIAC priorities, changes in the global security environment and the risk settings established by ASIO. It is not possible to state whether the recent trend in the number of assessments ASIO has experienced will continue.
4. ASIO agreed with all four recommendations of the Australian National Audit Office's report on security assessments of individuals, including strengthening workforce planning strategies. The requirement for timely and thorough security assessments continues to place pressure on ASIO's resources and must be prioritised against other core intelligence work.
5. ASIO will continue to seek to recruit new intelligence officers within budget allocations and increase the skill-set of existing officers to meet the increasingly diverse challenges of our security environment.