

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2014**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Security Threat Assessment**

Question: **199**

Hansard Reference **p 55, 26 May 2014**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

Senator WONG: Returning to the passes issue, I think Ms Mills or Mr Skill took on notice the security threat assessment question.

Mr Skill: I think so, yes.

Senator WONG: So you will provide that, with redactions, if required.

Mr Skill: My interpretation was that you asked for some details around the number of passes on issue—

Senator WONG: No, I am coming to that. Earlier I asked about whether or not a security threat assessment, or risk assessment, was undertaken. I was told yes. I am asking on notice for details of that—a copy of the document, with appropriate redactions

...

Senator WONG: Who saw the final version?

Mr Skill: I would have to check the final circulation, but my understanding is that it went to the Security Management Board.

Answer

The risk assessment prepared by the Department is attached. Sensitive material has been redacted.

APH physical security risk assessment–

Targeted Screening Arrangements at Non-public Access Points

Introduction

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) is planning the introduction of a Trial Change to screening Arrangements (Targeted Screening) for the Australian Parliament House (APH).

The assessment goes on to outline and recommend a range of risk treatments that could offset any foreseen increased risks resulting from the trial. The options presented in this assessment allow for scalable measures depending on the risk profile of each specified category of exempt persons.

It further recommends a phased and targeted approach, commencing with screening exemptions for Members and Senators, their staff and nominated next of kin, and a small number of photographic pass holders – all of whom are considered to be in the ‘low risk’ category.

While this assessment supports a targeted risk based approach to the reduced screening trial, there remains a level of residual risk acceptance across all proposed categories of exempt persons. The optimum risk mitigation is to retain full screening.

The Assessment

This assessment determined that any reduction in screening will increase the level of inherent risk to APH in the current threat environment (noting the extant threat level as advised by the National Threat Assessment Centre in the Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation). These risks are minor in nature however, and can be further reduced by the adoption of a number of mitigating strategies.

{Redacted}.

Importantly however, the Presiding Officers have the ability to return screening to its original levels if so required in the event of an increased threat level or the visit of a high-profile dignitary (which may temporarily raise APH’s risk profile).

In risk managing the reduction in screening, it is recommended a phased ‘exemption from screening’ trial be undertaken with the selection of categories of exempt persons (including Senators and Members and authorised pass holders) based primarily on an analysis of the risks posed by each pass holder group in respect to an intentional or unintentional breach of security and/or coercion by an external threat source.

A summary of the proposed categories and their assessed level of risk are outlined below. A *Risk Register* and *Risk Matrix Table* (including taxonomy) are attached, and provide further detail in respect to the risk profile of each category and recommended additional mitigation measures.

Category 1 (Risk profile – Risk is rated as Low after mitigation is applied)

Members and Senators, their staff and nominated family members; Commonwealth, Parliamentary Department and Ministerial Act (MOPS) pass holders should constitute the primary category of persons to be exempt from APH screening arrangements as they pose the least level of security risk. This is because:

- they are elected representatives (or their family and/or chosen staff) who therefore hold positions of trust; or

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- they have been subject to background checking, which includes a 100% identification check and a police convictions check; and
- they have been subject to a security clearance process, which involves rigorous background checking and screening, including referee checks and (in some cases) psychological evaluations.

Some additional mitigation measures should be applied in this case however, to protect against an intentional or unwitting breach and to ensure arrangements are not exploited by external threat actors. These include *{Redacted}*.

An enhanced verification process involving *{Redacted}*.

Within this category are approximately 5000 pass holders, which makes up close to 50% of all permanent APH pass holders.

Category 2 (Risk profile – Risk is assessed as Significant after mitigation is applied)

This category includes Commonwealth Officers with non-photographic passes, private contractors, temporary access pass holders, Diplomats, Sponsored pass holders and the Media.

Their status as a medium risk category is determined by a variety of contributing risk factors. This includes the potential for *{Redacted}*

The volume of pass holders in this category, coupled with the fact that many are external to APH, makes it difficult to assess risk and in so doing recommend place appropriate control mechanisms around this category. There is also the potential for external exploitation and coercion of these categories.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of this group are not subject to background checking and as such it is difficult to make an assessment of the level of trust that can be placed in them in the APH security context. Should individual members of this component volunteer to be subject to these additional checks, this assessment is likely to change, noting cost and other factors associated with these checks (particularly around 'who pays' and what the rationalisation is for making non-government pass holders subject to a government screening regime).

{Redacted}

Threat and Risk Context

APH screening measures were implemented largely as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and subsequent attacks in Bali and the UK. At the time, the security environment had shifted significantly and the enhanced security measures were designed to provide mitigation against a possible terrorist style attack, very much akin to the enhanced screening measures at major Airports.

{Redacted}

The proposal to trial a reduction in screening for Parliamentarians and authorised personnel is not unlike the measures adopted by other parliaments, both in Australia and overseas. The UK Parliament for example allows its MPs to enter the building unscreened. *{Redacted}*.

All Australian State and Territory parliaments have adopted a similar approach but have also applied other mitigation measures. *{Redacted}*.

{Redacted}.

While terrorism remains a constant source of threat to APH, other threat types are far more likely, while some may be equivalent in terms of consequence. These include threats posed {Redacted}.

Significantly, these threat sources are highly unlikely to seek access through the non-public access points, and as such the trial does not affect current mitigations in relation to them.

The methods and tactics often adopted by the non-terrorist threat elements targeting APH include {Redacted}.

Another threat type in this context is {Redacted}.

Current Screening Arrangements

Currently all persons accessing APH are required to undergo physical screening (bag X-ray and walk-through metal detector). Current screening arrangements (via PSS human resourcing) {Redacted}.

During sitting periods each of the non-public screening points consist of PSS officers undertaking a combination of pass verification, metal detection, bag screening and pass issue tasks.

In addition, for the Members and Senators' entrances, an officer is located at the ceremonial entrance {Redacted}. The PSS resourcing arrangements for non-sitting periods {Redacted}.

The primary objective of the APH person screening arrangements is to {Redacted}. The screening does not {Redacted}.

Impact of Reduced Screening

The table over the page summarises the risk level of each category of exempt persons in the context of the inherent risks should screening be reduced. The risk profile of each category and impacts have been based on the most likely risk occurrence if screening is reduced, with the common theme {Redacted}.

As is evident in the previous table the **Category 1** exempt persons present the lowest risk to APH if screening is reduced. However, **Category 2** would require a greater level of additional mitigation if an exemption from screening was afforded, along with a higher degree of risk acceptance, {Redacted}.

Full screening currently {Redacted}. Reduced screening is {Redacted}.

Assessment Summary

A reduced screening regime will increase security risk, albeit at a small and manageable level. Screening exemption for Category One members poses the least risk, especially if the outlined remediation measures are applied. In addition, {Redacted} will remain critical if the system is to remain sound and confidence in it retained. A six to 12 month trial timeframe would allow modified screening and mitigation measures to be fully practiced across the spectrum of Parliamentary Activity, with a final and mid-point review conducted prior to consideration by the Presiding Officers as the risk owners.

Targeted Screening Trial: Risk Register

Inherent Risk Descriptor	Exempt Screening Category	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact	Risk Level Before Treatment	Treatment Options	Risk Level After Treatment
<p>APHR1) – Risk of a security breach where screening is reduced (including the carriage of a prohibited item into APH)</p>	<p>Exempted –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Members and Senators; – Staff of Parliamentary Departments; – Staff operating under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act; – Commonwealth officers (Photographic); – Elected members of other Australian Legislatures; – Nominated family members of Members and Senators; and – Political party secretariats. 	<p>Rare {Redacted}</p> <p><u>Total numbers: 5,000 (50% of APH permanent pass holders)</u></p>	<p>Major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Single/multiple fatality – Damage to critical infrastructure, including major repair and maintenance requirements – Recovery period {Redacted} 	MEDIUM	{Redacted}	LOW
<p>APHR2) – Risk of a security breach where screening is reduced (including the carriage of a prohibited item into APH)</p>	<p>Not Exempted –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ComCar (Non-Photographic) – Commonwealth Officer (Non-Photographic) – Diplomatic Corps – Former Senator, Member, Clerk, Dept. Secretary – Former Member/Senator's 	<p>Unlikely {Redacted}</p> <p><u>Total numbers: 5,000 (50% of APH permanent pass holders)</u></p>	<p>Major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Single/multiple fatality – Damage to critical infrastructure, including major repair and maintenance requirements – Recovery period {Redacted} 	MEDIUM	{Redacted}	MEDIUM

Inherent Risk Descriptor	Exempt Screening Category	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact	Risk Level Before Treatment	Treatment Options	Risk Level After Treatment
	Spouse/Partner - Media - Private Contractor - Senator/Member's Office Volunteer - Sponsored - Temporary Pass (Non-Photographic)					

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