



Senate Estimates opening statement

02 December 2025

Mike Noyes, acting Director-General of Security

Thank you, Chair.

You will have heard my Director-General, Mike Burgess, state that Australia has entered a period of strategic surprise and security fragility.

A complex, challenging and changing security environment is becoming more dynamic, diverse and degraded.

Dynamic, because Australia has never faced so many different threats at scale at once.

Diverse, because distinctions between threats are breaking down. As just one example, some nation states are using criminal proxies to conduct foreign interference, espionage and politically motivated violence.

Degraded, because authoritarian regimes are more willing to engage in reckless, high-harm activities.

This security environment makes ASIO's mission especially important – and difficult.

But we have repeatedly demonstrated an ability to counter Australia's most aggressive and sophisticated adversaries.

Working with our law enforcement partners, we disrupted 4 imminent or advanced onshore terrorist plots in the 24/25 financial year, even in circumstances where the plots involved individuals or small groups moving to violence with little or no warning.

In the last 3 years, we have successfully conducted 24 major espionage and foreign interference disruptions. And they are just the major disruptions; there have been many other interventions.

But operational activity is only one measure of success.

To further harden the security environment against espionage and foreign interference, ASIO is continuing to advance the Top Secret-Privileged Access (TS-PA) vetting reforms. Led by my colleague here with me today, Gus Gilmore, the TS-PA Vetting Authority within ASIO serves as a critical safeguard for Australia's most sensitive information and capabilities, protecting against the threat of compromise by trusted insiders and reinforcing the nation's security posture.

ASIO's responses and achievements in 2024-25 are reminders that we should not be insecure about our security. The threats facing Australia are substantial but not insurmountable. Foreign intelligence services are sophisticated but not unstoppable. A terrorism threat level of PROBABLE does not mean inevitable.

Thank you.