

Defence Portfolio

INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.1)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Was ASD, its officials or employees disclosing information to the Royal Commission prior to arrangements being finalised? If so, how were you risk-managing the process?

A. What did you see as the main risks?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

ASD disclosed unclassified information to the Royal Commission prior to an arrangement as the information was assessed as not requiring protection under the Australian Government’s Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF).

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.2)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Have there already been internal conversations about how the agency would navigate situations with the Royal Commissioner where there is disagreement about whether a piece of information can be shared or not?

- A. Can you walk us through your understanding of how you would resolve that with the Royal Commission and who you believe would ultimately get the final say on determining what can be disclosed?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

No.

A. The Arrangement recognises the importance of the Royal Commission having access to certain intelligence information and sets out the process for obtaining, using and disclosing this information appropriately.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.3)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

What is the agency currently doing or what does it plan to do to message to staff about collaborating with the Royal Commission?

- A. Are you explaining their rights to them and telling them how they can voluntarily disclose information?
- B. Can you give some examples?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

ASD has issued all-staff messaging regarding the Royal Commission. As the Bill has not yet passed, messaging on voluntary disclosures has not yet occurred.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.4)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Tangibly, what actual systems and processes will be in place for someone to make voluntary disclosures? Will there be dedicated secure networks or messaging systems so officials can communicate directly with the Royal Commission without fear of colleagues being aware of that communication?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

This is a matter for the Royal Commission, however based on the agreed Arrangement information must be treated consistent with the PSPF.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.5)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Will ASD contractors have protections to disclose?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

The Bill as drafted will apply to all ASD contractors.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.6)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

How will foreign intelligence holdings be treated? Will it be possible to disclose foreign intelligence shared with ASD with the Royal Commission?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

The Arrangement provides for the communication of foreign government information with an appropriate process under section 4.2.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.7)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

If this Bill were not to pass, can you give me some examples of the sorts of information you would have to withhold or which officials in your agency may feel unable to participate in the Royal Commission?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

The Arrangement provides appropriate protections for ASD officials acting on behalf of ASD to provide information to the Royal Commission. Without the Bill, it would be an offence for ASD staff acting in their personal capacity to provide ASD intelligence information to the Royal Commission.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.8)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

How will this Bill interact with ASD's examination powers? Will information disclosed in an examination be able to be disclosed to a Royal Commission?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

ASD does not have examination powers.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.9)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Do you anticipate former members of staff wishing to make disclosures, if so how will that be facilitated?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

This is a matter for the Royal Commission, however based on the agreed Arrangement information must be treated consistent with the PSPF.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.10)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Are there any current operations that need to be altered or paused to make account for the Royal Commission's work?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

For operational security reasons, ASD does not comment on operational matters.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.11)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Can you give us an insight into the typical timeframe it takes for an authorised disclosure to take place?

- A. With arrangements in place for this Bill will that timeframe now change?
- B. The Royal Commission's reporting dates are an interim report in April and a final report at the end of 2026. Will authorised disclosures be possible under this timeframe?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

The timeframe for an authorised disclosure depends on the nature of the information sought, and any required consultation. ASD assess current processes will support the Royal Commission's reporting timeframes.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.12)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Are disclosures to the Royal Commission and the IGIS handled by the same teams?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

No.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.13)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Do you anticipate that the process of making authorised disclosures to the Royal Commission will impact the timeframe of any work you are doing with the IGIS, such as current investigations?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

No.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.14)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

With regards to members of your staff that may make voluntary disclosures to the Royal Commission, how will you reassure your workforce that they won't be subject to adverse employment consequences if their voluntary disclosure becomes known within the organisation?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

ASD has a strong culture and long history of compliance and cooperation with oversight bodies. Current messaging to staff and leadership in relation to the Royal Commission will continue to reinforce staff rights and responsibilities.

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INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.15)

Senator Michaelia Cash asked the Australian Signals Directorate the following question, upon notice, on 06 March 2026:

Are there specific concerns you have about how current electronic surveillance legislation prohibits authorised or voluntary disclosure?

Senator Michaelia Cash – The Australian Signals Directorate provides the following answer to the Senator’s question:

No.