



5 July 2019

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Inquiry into the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the freedom of the press

Committee to scrutinise the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the freedom of the press

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) has commenced an inquiry into the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the freedom of the press. The inquiry was referred by the Attorney-General, The Hon Christian Porter MP, on 4 July 2019, for the PJCIS to inquire into the attached [Terms of Reference](#).

The Committee has been requested to report back to both Houses of Parliament by 17 October 2019.

The Chair, [Mr Andrew Hastie MP](#), said ‘the government has referred this inquiry based on concerns raised in relation to recent search warrants executed on members of the press, and the issue of balancing national security with the freedom of the press’.

‘This inquiry will allow the Committee to hear from the media, government agencies and other interested stakeholders as to the direct impact of these powers on civil society and their importance to both national security and the public interest. We will consider these issues closely and carefully.’

The Committee invites written submissions to this inquiry, to be received by **Friday, 26 July 2019**.

Further information on the inquiry can be obtained from the Committee’s [website](#).

Media inquiries:

Chair, Mr Andrew Hastie MP (Canning, WA) on 08 9534 8044 (Electorate office) or (02) 6277 4223 (Parliament House)

For background information:

Committee Secretariat, Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, (02) 6277 2360 or pjcis@aph.gov.au.

For more information about this Committee, you can visit its website. On the site, you can make a submission to an inquiry, read other submissions, and get details for upcoming public hearings. You can also track the Committee and receive email updates by clicking on the blue ‘Track Committee’ button in the bottom right hand corner of the page.

Terms of reference - Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security inquiry into the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the freedom of the press

The Committee is to inquire into and report back to both Houses of Parliament on the following matters:

- a) The experiences of journalists and media organisations that have, or could become, subject to the powers of law enforcement or intelligence agencies performing their functions, and the impact of the exercise of those powers on journalists' work, including informing the public.
- b) The reasons for which journalists and media organisations have, or could become, subject to those powers in the performance of the functions of law enforcement or intelligence agencies.
- c) Whether any, and if so what, changes could be made to procedures and thresholds for the exercise of those powers in relation to journalists and media organisations to better balance the need for press freedom with the need for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to investigate serious offending and obtain intelligence on security threats.
- d) Without limiting the other matters that the Committee may consider, two issues for specific inquiry are:
 - a. whether and in what circumstances there could be contested hearings in relation to warrants authorising investigative action in relation to journalists and media organisations.
 - b. the appropriateness of current thresholds for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to access electronic data on devices used by journalists and media organisations.

The Committee is to report back to both Houses of Parliament by 17 October 2019.