



# Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024 – ASIO’s response to Questions on Notice

## Question 1

Senator Grogan: What are the risks of misinformation and disinformation to Australian national security?

### Response

ASIO protects Australia and Australians from threats to their security, as defined by the ASIO Act. The critical question for ASIO is whether or not the activity constitutes an act of foreign interference, as defined by the ASIO Act, or the activity motivates, promotes or otherwise influences politically motivated violence (PMV) or the promotion of communal violence (PCV).

Disinformation could constitute an act of foreign interference where a foreign power or its proxy is spreading information clandestinely. In such instances, Australia’s national interests could be negatively impacted in favor of a foreign power’s interests, with potential risks to our political or governmental processes.

Disinformation promoting PMV/PCV would constitute a threat to security where, for example, an entity promotes false information about a religious, ethnic or issue-based group to encourage, or justify, acts of violence against that group. It is the promotion of violence that activates ASIO’s interest, not whether it is based on misinformation, disinformation or true information.

## Question 2

Senator Grogan: Why is it important that the bill be passed? How would this bill help to address the harm of misinformation and disinformation and protect Australia’s national security?

### Response

The importance of this bill is a question for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. ASIO does not lead the policy response on misinformation and disinformation. ASIO supports changes that seek to build the resilience of the Australian community to foreign interference and activities that motivate, promote or otherwise influence PMV/PCV, which may include acts of misinformation and disinformation.