

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

**Program:** 1.7 National Security and Criminal Justice

**Question No. SBE16/136**

**Senator Pratt asked the following question at the hearing on 12 December 2016:**

Questions for the department:

1. Is Whatsapp on the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) list of approved platforms for cabinet and sensitive communications?
2. Where are Whatsapp's servers located?
3. What are the risks that the use of non-secure communication platforms, rather than secure government servers, presents to Australia's security?
4. Are the Prime Minister and his Ministers defying the advice of one of the Government's key national security advisers that even unclassified information should not be shared on non-ASD approved platforms if that information is sensitive?

Questions to Senator Brandis:

5. Do you use Whatsapp or any other communication application not currently approved by the ASD?
6. Why isn't the Prime Minister ensuring that his Ministers are complying with their integrity obligations?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

1. No. The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) has not performed a formal assessment of Whatsapp.
2. The Attorney-General's Department is not aware of the location of Whatsapp's servers.
3. The Protective Security Policy Framework details requirements to safeguard official information and is available at <https://www.protectivesecurity.gov.au/informationsecurity>. ASD provides advice on ICT security through the Information Security Manual (ISM). The ISM is available at <https://www.asd.gov.au/infosec/ism/>.
4. The Attorney-General's Department is unable to provide advice on the conduct of ministers.
5. Yes.
6. I am unable to provide advice on the conduct of ministers.