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

Group: 3

Program: Other Agency

Question No. BE15/055

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 27 and 28 May 2015:
Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Was any advice given to particular departments about whether they should review their security protocols, or in what way they should review their security protocols, in a heightened environment?

Ms K Jones: I will have to defer to ASIO in relation to any specific advice.

Mr Lewis: Senator, I am not sure. At the time that the alert level was increased I know that all government departments and agencies were responsive to that particular advice. I recall, from my time in previous departments, that each of those departments had a plan which would be put into action at the time of heightened alert, and I imagine that individual departments did that. My own organisation did, and I assume that that has occurred throughout government.

Ms Hartland: Senator, I know that there were, but we would have to take on notice the exact nature of it, as the director-general said. There are certainly some departments that asked us specifically for assessments and threat assessments that we would have provided to them.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: No, I am going back now to the discussion we had yesterday about the letter that was received by the Attorney-General and I am asking about the concept of the Islamic State. When did that concept come into existence? When was the Islamic State declared?

Mr Lewis: I will have to check on that. It was in the middle of last year sometime. I might have to come back to you on the precise date.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:
ASIO provided 171 Australian Government agencies (70 corporate and 101 non-corporate Commonwealth entities) with protective security advice for heightened threat environments on 12 September 2014. This advice, contained in a protective security circular, includes encouraging agencies to:
- Adopt a risk managed approach to implementing protective security measures in a heightened threat environment.
- Ensure staff are aware of the security environment, security procedures and their reporting requirements.
- Review and test security procedures and emergency plans to ensure effectiveness.
- Ensure Emergency Services contacts are up to date.
- Ensure any access restrictions are enforced.
- Test security infrastructure to ensure it is operational.

In respect to the physical security response from agencies and ministerial offices following the increase in public alert level, this is a matter for the individual agencies or offices, or their respective security advisor.