

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**  
**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017**

**Australian Security Intelligence Organisation**

**Question No. BE17-143**

**Senator Roberts asked the following question on 13 June 2017:**

Given Mr Duncan Lewis' comments in the media, I wanted to ask for some further clarification.

1. Does ASIO stand by Mr Lewis' assessment that terrorists typically become terrorists because of adopting a particular, violent extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam?
2. Does Australia allow people who openly embrace this violent, extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam to enter the country?
3. Do people who do not originally subscribe to this violent, extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam nonetheless sometimes convert to it?
4. Are people who subscribe to other interpretations of Islam more likely to convert to this violent, extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam than members of the general community?

**The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:**

1. There a small number of Australia-based individuals who remain committed to anti-Western violent Sunni Islamist extremist ideology and who display intent to conduct politically motivated violence. It is important to note, this is not the only source of politically motivated violence.
2. All applicants for Australian visas are checked by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection against national security alert holdings. Some cases are referred to ASIO for further checking and assessment.
3. Many of the recent terrorist attacks and disrupted plots in Australia involved individuals or small groups who were radicalised, including through isolated online activity, to the point where they were willing to undertake an act of violence.
4. ASIO investigations focus on identifying individuals who pose a threat of politically motivated violence. Our efforts are directed towards individuals, not towards groups or communities.