

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION

Question No. 61

Senator Wright asked the following question at the hearing on 14 February 2012:

1. How does ASIO monitor the accuracy of information it collects? Please be specific and detail the mechanisms and accountability procedures in place to ensure that the information ASIO collects is accurate.
2. Has the percentage of incorrect data and information increased in recent years, particularly given the amount of information on the internet and the transferring of data between different sources? If yes, please explain reasons for this increase and the safety mechanism ASIO has in place to detect incorrect information.
3. Does ASIO conduct periodic and snap audits of information it collects? If yes, how frequent are they? Are these audits conducted internally, or by external people who are independent of ASIO? Are these audits publicly reported?

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

1. ASIO's primary function is to obtain, correlate, evaluate and communicate intelligence relevant to security, as defined in the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* (the ASIO Act).

ASIO collects information from a wide variety of sources. ASIO analyses critically and evaluates information it obtains and makes judgements as to its relevance to security, accuracy, and significance, as well as the reliability and credibility of the source from which it was obtained. Part of this process may involve seeking corroboration of information through another or multiple sources. By its very nature, intelligence can sometimes be imprecise and incomplete. ASIO relies on the professional judgement and experience of its analysts, who receive extensive training in analytical techniques, methodologies and in making intelligence assessments.

When reporting security intelligence to government in accordance with the ASIO Act, ASIO provides comment on credibility and reliability as appropriate.

2. ASIO collects information from a wide variety of sources, including publically available sources. ASIO critically analyses and evaluates each piece of information it obtains and makes judgements as to its relevance to security, accuracy, and significance, as well as the reliability and credibility of the source from which it was obtained.

Intelligence, by its very nature can sometimes be imprecise and incomplete. Information received from one source may corroborate, or conversely, contradict that received from another. Where there is any question about the accuracy of information obtained, ASIO will seek to resolve that uncertainty through further inquiries or investigative action as necessary. The exponential increase in available information, including through the Internet, has made the process of corroborating intelligence even more pertinent for ASIO.

3. It is a core function of ASIO to analyse and assess the information it collects. Evaluation and review of intelligence is a continual, ongoing element of the intelligence cycle. Analysts regularly review intelligence assessments as new information is received to determine whether those assessments are substantiated, contradicted or otherwise altered by any subsequent piece of information.

Internal line management structures provide for regular review of assessments.

The Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security conducts a comprehensive program of routine inspections of ASIO's investigations and operations, to ensure ASIO acts legally and with propriety.