

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

**Question No. 88**

**Senator Ludlam asked the following question at the hearing on 26 May 2009:**

Explain the extent to which Australia's security intelligence and law enforcement agencies are devoting resources to peaceful protests.

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

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) works to a set of enduring priorities which are specified in the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* (the ASIO Act). At present, the vast majority of ASIO's resources are devoted to countering terrorism and espionage. Consistent with Section 17A of the ASIO Act, no ASIO resources are devoted to constraining legitimate democratic dissent, such as through peaceful protest. ASIO would only devote resources to protest activity if the activity was relevant to security, as defined in the ASIO Act. For example, the ASIO Act requires ASIO to correlate and evaluate intelligence to protect against acts of politically motivated violence or the promotion of communal violence.