

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Question No. 83

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:

- a) Aside from the Attorney-General's Department, which private organisations and government departments and agencies use the Australian Vetting Service?
- b) How many requests does the Australian Vetting Services receive per year and per month since its inception?
- c) Is there any private component to the Australian Vetting Service?
- d) Are there any components of the Australian Vetting Service that are outsourced?
 - (i) If so, what are the components that have been outsourced?
- e) What is the turnaround time for the clearances from the Australian Vetting Service?
- f) Is there an average turnaround time?
- g) Is there a target time for turnarounds for clearances from the AVS?
 - (i) If so, what is the target time? Is it currently being met (please provide figures for 00-01-02-03-04-05.
 - (ii) If not, why not?
- h) Does this differ for different classes of customers? If so, by how much?
- i) What measures are taken in the interim if a clearance can't be provided in a timely manner?
- j) What fee does the Australian Vetting Service charge for its services to both public and private entities?
- k) Could the AFP provide a breakdown for the 1.8 million funding provided to this service?
 - (i) Aside from the fees it charges, what other funding does this body receive and from where?
- l) How many staff does the service employ?
- m) Where are the staff sourced from?
- n) What are their position descriptions?

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

- a) The ASVS provides security vetting services to 95 government departments and agencies.

b) The following tables show the requests received by the Australian Security Vetting Services by year and month since its inception.

Table 1: Number of requests received per financial year since July 1996

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	July 2005- 25 Nov 05
Requests	291	1,314	2,748	4,342	3,885	3,317	4,228	4,401	4,110	1,972

Table 2: Number of requests per month for each financial year since July 1996

Requests	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	July 2005- 25 Nov 05
Jul	0	34	150	514	315	317	182	355	290	437
Aug	1	37	124	513	466	391	200	360	380	366
Sep	4	83	164	319	387	236	197	483	385	331
Oct	34	57	139	354	313	226	211	391	272	426
Nov	36	71	102	228	230	279	397	312	389	412
Dec	20	53	79	142	273	307	355	236	129	
Jan	15	67	87	230	284	252	305	287	239	
Feb	19	95	58	355	483	270	470	502	308	
Mar	22	159	68	432	279	241	394	449	400	
Apr	26	189	459	363	283	236	384	362	470	
May	68	240	905	431	315	213	748	296	440	
Jun	46	229	413	461	257	349	385	368	408	
FY Total	291	1,314	2,748	4,342	3,885	3,317	4,228	4,401	4,110	1,972

c) No.

d) Yes. The ASVS has a pool of fully experienced contracted assessing officers that can be utilised depending on demand and if it is necessary to conduct vetting interviews of personnel located outside Canberra.

e), f) g) The target period, commencing on receipt of a fully completed vetting package from the individual vettee or the client agency, is set out below.

- Top Secret 12 Weeks
- Highly Protected and Secret 8 Weeks
- Protected and Confidential 6 Weeks

The ability of the ASVS to meet the timeframes is dependent upon a number of factors including:

- the degree of accurate completion and submission of supporting documents by the vettee
- the availability and degree of cooperation of the vettee in providing further information; and
- the timeliness of responses of other parties to requests for information.

h) No.

i) Where a person's security clearance is yet to be finalised, interim arrangements can be made at the discretion of the agency head.

j) The current ASVS fee schedule for security clearances is:

Initial Clearances

Top Secret	\$1 520
Secret / Highly Protected	\$ 635
Confidential / Protected	\$ 360

Re-Evaluations

Top Secret	\$1,390.90
Secret and Highly Protected	\$505.00
Confidential and Protected	\$230.00

Hourly Rate

Revalidation and Upgrade	\$130.00
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A cancellation fee of \$65.00 applies. If the process is underway, the cancellation fee is pro-rata time taken at \$130.00 per hour

There is no differentiation between public and private entities. The fee is based on the level and type of clearance action. It is relevant where a government department or agency clears a private contractor engaged to work on its behalf.

k) In 2004-05, the Australian Security Vetting Service was allocated \$1,839,578. This comprised employee costs of \$1,103,348 and Supplier costs of \$736,230.

The ASVS is Budget funded. The ASVS operates on a cost recovery basis with revenue returned to the Department.

l) As at 25 November 2005, the ASVS has 18 staff.

m) ASVS staff are sourced and selected through the usual Australian Public Service recruitment processes.

n) The position descriptions are:

Manager

Assistant Manager, Vetting

Assistant Manager, Business Support

Team Leader (2)

Senior Assessing Officers (4)

Assessing Officers (5)

Admin Supervisor

Admin Officer (3).