

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

Question No. 54

Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

In relation to ASIO's staffing:

1. Will ASIO meet the number of 1860 full-time staff as recommended by the Review of ASIO Resourcing, conducted in 2005 by the 2012-13 budget cycle? If not, why?
2. What impact will the \$69.2 million in net savings target, imposed by the Government, have on ASIO's capabilities?
3. Has staff growth in the organisation been deferred indefinitely?
4. In terms of international engagement, how drastic was the reduction in ASIO's scope, as a result of budgetary pressures?

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

1. The Review of ASIO Resourcing, conducted in 2005, identified 1,860 full-time staff as the endpoint target for ASIO. As part of the Government's 2012 – 13 Budget, and consistent with the Government's fiscal policy, ASIO's approved endpoint was reduced in February 2012 to 1,760, however ASIO is maintaining a staffing level of 1,730 in order to manage within its current budget.
2. ASIO is examining options to manage the situation without a significant diminution of its core operations. To date ASIO has implemented the following:
 - a. reduced its overseas presences;
 - b. reduced its foreign engagement for training and capability development purposes;
 - c. reduced the amount of domestic and overseas travel undertaken by ASIO officers; and
 - d. made reductions to its senior executive structure.
3. Yes. While overall staff growth has been deferred indefinitely ASIO will continue to recruit new intelligence professionals and technical officers within budget allocations and increase the skill-set of existing officers to meet the increasingly diverse challenges of our security environment. ASIO's intelligence capabilities are national resources – it is vital they are preserved to address national security threats and the security challenges of the future.
4. In response to budgetary pressures ASIO has:
 - a. reduced the size, but not the reach, of its overseas presence;
 - b. reduced its foreign engagement for training and capability development purposes;
 - c. reduced the amount of domestic and overseas travel undertaken by ASIO officers; and
 - d. reduced its senior executive structure.