

D Notices

A D Notice is a communication issued to the media by the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee. It outlines subjects which bear upon defence or national security, and requests editors to refrain from publishing certain information about those subjects.

Issue and observance of D Notices

Membership of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee comprises representatives of the print and broadcasting media and the government. It is chaired by the Minister for Defence, whose department is responsible for administrative support to the Committee. When the Committee last met, in 1982, it comprised 16 media representatives and four Defence representatives. [1] This committee issues D Notices to the media.

The system is voluntary and non-observance of a request contained in a D Notice carries no penalties. In the end, it is for an editor to decide whether to publish an item of information, having regard to national security requirements.

Origins of the D Notice system

The D Notice system was started in England in 1912. It was modified slightly to meet the increased security demands and the changed condition of wartime, and was resumed after the war – much on the same lines as when it began. The Australian D Notice system was introduced in 1952. The D denotes Defence, reflecting the origin of the notices in World War I as a means of protecting defence-related information.

Australian D Notices

Since 1952 D Notices have been issued by the Committee as the need has been perceived. The files listed in the table below provide information on those notices issued during the 1950s. A review conducted in 1974 reduced the number of D Notices from seven to four. This number was confirmed at four by a review conducted in 1982.

These D Notices, which have been in force since 1982 are:

- D Notice 1 – Capabilities of the Australian Defence Force, Including Aircraft, Ships, Weapons, and Other Equipment;

- D Notice 2 – Whereabouts of Mr and Mrs Vladimir Petrov;
- D Notice 3 – Signals Intelligence and Communications Security; and
- D Notice 4 – Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS).

Records relating to D Notices

Records relating to D Notices may be found in the major correspondence series of the Departments of Defence and the Prime Minister and Cabinet as well as other related agencies. A selection of files from such series held by the Archives' Canberra office are listed below.

Department of Defence (CA 46)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Security of defence information. D Notices to the press</u>	1947–1954	A816, 10/301/130
<u>Distribution of D Notices by Secretary of Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee</u>	1952	A816, 10/301/131
<u>D Notice number 10 – atomic tests at Woomera</u>	1953	A816, 10/301/138
<u>D Notice number 11 – secret agents</u>	1945–1955	A816, 10/301/140
<u>D Notices – Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee – membership</u>	1952–1960	A816, 10/301/142
<u>D Notice – Applications for political asylum</u>	1956	A816, 10/301/146

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (CA 1401)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Security of defence information. D Notices to the press</u>	1950–1956	A1209, 1957/5486

Defence Committee (CA 289)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Security of defence information – D Notices to the press</u>	1952	A5799, 68/1952
<u>Security of defence information – D Notices system</u>	1952	A5799, 285/1952

Sir Frederick Geoffrey Shedden (CP 320)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>D Notices Committee – Correspondence re selection of secretary</u>	1952	A5954, 1956/2
<u>Security of Defence information – D Notices to the press</u>	1947–1952	A5954, 1956/6

For more information

[1] Commission of Inquiry into the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, *Report on the Australian Secret Intelligence Service*, Public Edition, AGPS, Canberra, 1995, Chapter 11.