

Personal information in ASIO records

Access to ASIO records

The National Archives in Canberra holds many records of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). ASIO is the Commonwealth government agency responsible for collecting and evaluating security intelligence (i.e. intelligence relevant to Australia's domestic security).

Most ASIO records held by the National Archives relate to the investigation and surveillance of individuals, groups and organisations. Most of the records held are files, but film, photographic material and sound recordings are also held. Amongst these are files containing personal information collected by ASIO on many individuals. These records, like most other Commonwealth records, are eligible for public release under the *Archives Act 1983*.

Content of ASIO records

The content of individual ASIO records was determined by ASIO's recordkeeping practices, and the nature of intelligence that was gathered by ASIO about a person, organisation or subject. In addition, as these records were primarily intended for internal use, they can be somewhat opaque and difficult for members of the public to interpret.

Information regarding ASIO's recordkeeping practices, interpreting ASIO records, and commonly used acronyms and abbreviations can be found in David McKnight's chapter, "How to read your ASIO file" in *Dirty Secrets: Our ASIO Files*, edited by Meredith Burgmann (McKnight, David. "How to read your ASIO file" in Meredith Burgmann (ed.), *Dirty Secrets: Our ASIO Files*, UNSW Press, 2014, pp. 21–46).

Accuracy of personal information in ASIO records

On occasion, people who are the subject of ASIO files released under the Archives Act have raised with the National Archives concerns that information contained in those files may not be wholly accurate and have asked that it be amended.

Because ASIO records are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, subjects of ASIO records, unlike subjects of most other Commonwealth agency records, are unable to request that information which is recorded about them on ASIO records be changed if it is incomplete, incorrect, out of date or misleading.

Courses of action if you are the subject of the file

The National Archives has discussed these concerns about the accuracy of personal information on ASIO files with ASIO and with the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security. The Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security was established in 1987 to assist Ministers responsible for Australia's security agencies to oversee and review the activities of these agencies.

As a result of these discussions, it has been agreed to adopt the following procedures:

If you believe the file contains information that is inaccurate

The subject of an ASIO file may, if he or she wishes, provide the National Archives with a written statement identifying information contained in the file that is believed to be inaccurate.

If the subject of the file is deceased, the spouse or child of the subject may provide the statement. The statement, which must be signed and dated by its author, should be as clear and concise as possible and should deal only with material contained in the ASIO file. The statement should be addressed to:

Director, Reference and Information Services
National Archives of Australia
PO Box 4924
KINGSTON ACT 4924

The National Archives will place the statement on the file. This does not constitute an endorsement by the National Archives of the information contained in the statement.

If you believe you have been adversely affected by actions of ASIO

If the subject of the file is of the view that actions taken by ASIO have at some time affected him or her adversely then he or she may approach the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security at the following address:

Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security
PO Box 6181
Kingston ACT 2604

Tel: (02) 6271 5692
Fax: (02) 6271 5696
Email: info@iqis.gov.au

The Inspector-General will then, if considered appropriate, investigate and report on the matter.

Further information about ASIO and its records is available in:

- *Fact sheet 33 - Security and intelligence records*
- *Fact sheet 52 - Exempt information in ASIO records*

If you have further questions regarding ASIO records please [contact us](#).