



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2013-2014**

**Consideration in Detail**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 4 June 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 4 June 2013  
**Page** 5259  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** O'Connor, Brendan, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (Gorton—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (19:50): I thank the honourable member for his question. As I say, I am very happy that the honourable member will take up a briefing on some of those issues. The first time I was briefed on this matter was on 17 April 2013. Also, I am advised that my predecessor, the then minister of immigration, was not briefed on this matter. So the first time the government was advised by the department was on 17 April. In response to the question asked by the honourable member, I make it very clear that we took this briefing very seriously. There is nothing more important than national security for any federal government. As a result of that, immediately after receiving the brief, I had conversations with the department, some of which were very sensitive. That is why I have afforded the opportunity for the honourable member, and indeed his colleagues, to be briefed by my department. I know the letter went to other agencies—I understand that. I do not think there will be any issue about the government providing briefings from all three agencies, although the Australian Federal Police are under the remit and portfolio of the Minister for Home Affairs and ASIO is within the realm of the portfolio of the Attorney-General. We are very happy to do that.

I made the point that ASIO have already briefed the shadow Attorney-General. That is not to say that there cannot be further briefings, with only one condition—the one I have already outlined. I can assure the honourable member that I take this matter most seriously. For that reason, we wanted to make sure that the department were doing everything they possibly could. The secretary to the department had made clear that assessments would be made in relation to the protocols among agencies—something I called for. The secretary to the department was already dealing with that when I responded to the brief and made it clear, in making assessments about the protocols, that you can always continue to improve arrangements among agencies.

I know matters have been raised about the nature of the detention of this person. Indeed, there has been monitoring and surveillance of this person, the details of which I cannot and will not disclose—the member would understand that. All things will be done to ensure the protection of our citizens. That is why I have great confidence that all agencies will do the right thing and will do a professional job in relation to this matter. The secretary to the department will provide me with his assessment once he engages with those agencies, to ensure that everything is being done and will continue to be done in relation to the arrangements for people in detention, ensuring that any risks are mitigated and that any concerns people might have can be allayed.

As I said, I am very happy to arrange the briefing as soon as practicable, ensuring that we get the appropriate officers from all three agencies to brief the opposition when we can.