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7:23am Monday, December 22nd, 2025



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EXCLUSIVE

# Climate Change Department chief replaces heads of ASIO and ASIS on National Security Committee of Cabinet

Australia's most senior climate change bureaucrat will have a seat at the National Security Committee after the Albanese government dumped the intelligence chiefs from a permanent spot on the premier security body.



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2 min read March 19, 2024 - 8:45PM

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**Climate Change Secretary to be regular attendee of National Security Committ...**

Sky News can reveal Climate Change Department Secretary David Fredericks is a new regul more

The Climate Change Department Secretary is a new regular attendee to the National Security Committee of Cabinet, while our two intelligence chiefs have been removed as

While our top intelligence chiefs have been removed as permanent members.

Sky News Australia can reveal that Climate Change Department Secretary David Fredericks has attended the premiere national security body, despite ASIO and ASIS directors-general no longer being automatic members.

Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen and the Labor Government declined to respond to questions about how often and why Mr Fredericks attends the National Security Committee of Cabinet.

A spokesman for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet said it does not comment on national security matters.

***Sharri Markson broke this story on Sky News Australia. You can now watch Sky News live, or catch up on full episodes on-demand, with a SkyNews.com.au Streaming Subscription for \$5 per month. [Click here to watch tonight's episode of 'Sharri' in full.](#)***





Climate Change Department Secretary David Fredericks has attended the premiere national security body, despite ASIO and ASIS directors-general no longer being automatic members. Picture: Getty Images

It comes as Sky News can also reveal the intelligence community has serious concerns about the approach the Albanese Government is taking to national security, particularly China.

Intelligence community insiders are speculating about the future of Mr Burgess and the Office of National Intelligence Director-General Andrew Shearer; there's discussion that their appointments may not be renewed when their terms are up later this year for Mr Burgess and early next year for Mr Shearer.

But the Department did defend the unusual decision to put esteemed public servant Peter Varghese in charge of a review of government funding for think-tanks when he already chairs a separate think-tank, AsiaLink.

A spokesperson for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet said that all conflicts of interest had been disclosed.

"Mr Varghese's extensive career in the public service has included senior positions in foreign affairs, trade policy, and intelligence. This makes him uniquely skilled and experienced for the role," the spokesperson said.

"Australian Government procurement policy requires any conflict of interest, perceived or actual, to be disclosed before a contract commences."



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The Albanese government has removed the heads of intelligence ag more

The Opposition has demanded answers from the Federal Government over Sky News's revelation that the heads of ASIO and ASIS have been kicked out of the national security committee of cabinet.

Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, James Paterson, said the Prime Minister should reverse the decision to no longer have ASIO head Mike Burgess and ASIS chief Kerri Hartland as permanent members of the National Security Committee of Cabinet.

He said he hoped Mr Albanese was "embarrassed" by these revelations and said it explains why the Federal Government's approach to national security has been weak.

"No wonder the Albanese government has been so weak on national security," Mr Paterson said.



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"No wonder they have made so many poor decisions. They haven't had the key people in the room to provide them with the advice that they need, and maybe some of the advice that they don't want to hear. And maybe that's why they've been removed from the room."

The ASIO director-general, Mike Burgess, is a key pillar in protecting Australia from acts of foreign interference, attacks on our defence system, espionage, terrorism, and threats to border integrity.

And the Australian Secret Intelligence Service director-general, Kerri Hartland, is in charge of our overseas secret intelligence agency, collecting foreign intelligence to protect our security.

Yet, they're no longer automatic members of the premiere national security forum to give advice on urgent threats. Instead, they're invited in on a case-by-case basis.

The permanent members of the National Security Committee of Cabinet include Anthony Albanese, Richard Marles, Penny Wong, Jim Chalmers, Chris Bowen, Mark Dreyfus, Clare O'Neil, Katy Gallagher and Pat Conroy.

