



Immigration Minister Peter Dutton and Attorney-General George Brandis.

[Andrew Bolt](#)

Giving Peter Dutton control of security agencies seems to be about keeping Malcolm Turnbull in power

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WHAT a scandal if Malcolm Turnbull has indeed given Peter Dutton control of all our big security agencies just to stay Prime Minister. That may seem a conspiracy theory, but Attorney-General George Brandis has given a joke of an excuse for this huge concentration of power.

Turnbull has stripped Brandis of responsibility for the spy agency, ASIO, and given it to Dutton, the powerful conservative keeping Tony Abbott off Turnbull's back. Dutton, now the Immigration Minister, will over the next year also get the Australian Federal Police and other security agencies to become the new Home Affairs Minister.

Brandis on Tuesday was made to publicly approve of the changes he'd privately resisted, and offered a humiliating self-criticism of the kind given by Chinese prisoners. Brandis suggested that losing ASIO was just what he deserved after neglecting our safety.

"Though my focus has been on national security, it has not been able to be an exclusive focus," he admitted. "There are always other things within the Attorney-General's portfolio which also occupy my attention." But Dutton "can give 100 per cent of his time and his attention to national security". Which is false.

Dutton is no more able to give national security "100 per cent of his time" than was Brandis.

He remains in charge of immigration, deciding such things as how many migrants to let in, where they should go, what handouts they need and what skills we must import. He also runs detention centres and refugee and reunion programs. The real reason Dutton gets this extra power seems simple.

He is the key conservative keeping Turnbull in power.

He was a strong supporter of former prime minister Abbott, but now attacks Abbott and defends Turnbull. But he's ambitious and impatient. Turnbull had to give him more power or risk Dutton challenging for his job or accepting the promise of promotion from a challenger.

Turnbull denies such theories.

But he admits he's making these changes "not because the system is broken". Moreover, every review of our intelligence services — including Turnbull's own — has rejected such a concentration of power or failed to recommend it. ASIO and the AFP are also against it.

Liberals may be sorry one day. What if the minister in charge of every big security agency, hogging the information, is not Dutton but Labor's Tanya Plibersek?