



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

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MEDIA RELEASE

New Minister contradicts his own Department on ID fraud

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"The Minister who was today put in charge of the Government's controversial ID Card proposal, Senator Chris Ellison, only last week contradicted the position of the Office of the Access Card, on the level of identity fraud in Australia", said the Australian Privacy Foundation today.

"When it comes to the so-called Access Card, the left hand obviously doesn't know what the right hand is doing", said the Foundation's 'No ID Card' Campaign Director, Anna Johnston, on hearing of Senator Ellison's appointment.

Last Friday, officials from KPMG and the Office of the Access Card appeared before a Senate Committee investigating the Human Services (Enhanced Service Delivery) Bill 2007 – the legislation supposed to establish the legal framework for the Access Card.

In its submission to the Senate Committee, the Office of the Access Card said that the cost of identity fraud in Australia is between \$1 billion and \$4 billion a year. Their only reference for suggesting the level is anywhere near \$4 billion a year is a line taken from a speech by Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Mick Keelty.

Yet on the same day, Commissioner Keelty's boss, the Minister for Justice – Senator Chris Ellison – put out a press release claiming the cost of identity fraud in Australia is only \$1.1 billion a year. Senator Ellison's figure comes from independent research commissioned by the Government.

"If the Government cannot even get its facts straight on the cost of identity fraud, how can we be sure they've got their cost estimates right about how much taxpayers will be paying for this ID Card?", she said. "Or whether the benefits will even outweigh the costs?"

"Today we call upon the new Minister to take a deep breath and dump the Access Card project before it is too late. The proposal as drafted is unjustified, unworkable, inadequate, and a potentially costly and stupid mistake. There is not a single good reason to try and rush this proposal through", said Ms Johnston.

"All major political parties, including the Government, have stated that they are opposed to a national ID card", noted Ms Johnston. "Yet why is it that only a few Coalition MPs still can't see what everyone else can – that the Access Card is a national ID card?", she said.

"We would welcome the chance to meet with Minister Ellison and discuss alternative strategies to deal with welfare fraud, and improve government service delivery, that do not involve complex, unpopular, expensive schemes that will morph into an ID card", said Ms Johnston.

Senator Ellison's media release on 2 March 2007 was titled "Scams take \$1 billion-plus toll on consumers", and is available from

<http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/WWW/justiceministerHome.nsf/Page/Home>