



Australian Privacy Foundation

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HOWARD GOVERNMENT WINS GLOBAL AWARD FOR STUPID SECURITY CAMPAIGN

SYDNEY, APRIL 10: The Australian Government has emerged as a winner of a global competition to identify the most pointless, intrusive and self-serving security measure implemented around the world since September 11 2001.

The competition, conducted by human rights watchdog Privacy International, attracted almost 5,000 entries from 35 countries around the world. While airport security practices dominated the competition, nominations arose from almost all areas of government and business activity. The award was judged by an international panel of security and privacy experts and is intended to highlight the absurdities of the security industry.

The Australian Government was awarded the Most Egregiously Stupid Award for a "litany of pointless, irritating and self-serving security measures", centred around the fridge magnet campaign during the summer.

"The award is a significant recognition of the unique terrorism education campaign that has been conducted in Australia," said Tim Dixon, a judge on the competition panel and a spokesman for the Australian Privacy Foundation, which is affiliated with Privacy International. "Judging by the nominations that were received in the competition, no other government outside of the United States has implemented a campaign quite like it."

Other prizes included:

Most Flagrantly Intrusive Award

- Winner: Delta Terminal at JFK Airport in New York, where a woman was required to drink the three bottles of her breast milk that she had expressed for her 4 month old baby, before boarding a flight.
- Runner-Up: Carson City Correctional Facility, Michigan, where after a three hour drive a woman was refused permission to see her son in prison because she was not wearing a bra – all for security reasons.

Most Inexplicably Stupid Award

- Winner: Philadelphia Airport, where authorities quarantined a hospital emergency room, a doughnut shop and a drug store after finding cologne in a student's carry-on luggage. The melee was prompted by the student spraying the cologne on himself to show that it was just cologne.
- Runner Up: Heathrow Airport, where a security guard detained an elderly passenger when he found a package of Chinese tea labelled Gunpowder Tea in his luggage. The guard confiscated the package and returned the tea to the man in a plastic bag.

The Most Annoying Stupid Award

- Winner: T-Mobile in the UK, which requires two forms of ID for customers to pay phone bills by credit card.
- Runner Up: San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transport, which has closed down all of its toilets – resulting in considerable unpleasantness for passengers.

Most Counter-Productive Security Award

- Winner: San Francisco General Hospital, which introduced armed security guards at its front doors, requiring photo ID from people before entering. This resulted in hundreds of homeless people being refused entry, and large numbers of sick people wandering into the hospital through side entry doors into individual wards, looking for emergency care.
- Runner Up: San Francisco International Airport, where a security guard introduced a practice of asking travellers to remove their shoes before he slammed them down on the floor to ensure that they did not contain explosives.

The Privacy Foundation has defended the competition from criticism that security procedures should not be ridiculed. "No doubt some people might want to muzzle any criticism or questioning of anything that is done 'for security purposes'. But effective security measures should be targeted where there are real risks – we need to use commonsense, otherwise we might as well be wearing hard hats just in case the sky falls in," said Mr Dixon.

Full details of the winning entries, and details of other examples of stupid security, are listed on the Privacy International web site at:

<http://www.privacyinternational.org/activities/stupidsecurity/winners.html>

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