



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

LETTER TO EDITOR

ID card cost does not add up

Australian Financial Review, 25 July 2005, p.51

Yes we do need an intelligent debate on any proposed national ID card but it's just a pity John Hewson hasn't contributed to it. ("Australia Card is inevitable", AFR, 22 July 2005).

Hewson's bold assertions about the effect an ID card would have on terrorism are not only not backed up by any evidence, they have been contradicted by terrorism experts.

His claims about the security benefits of storing information centrally have likewise been contradicted by computer and data security experts.

He suggests what we really need is a right to access the personal information held about us by federal government.

Wake up John, we've had that right since 1988 – it's found in the Privacy Act. Ring any bells? You were a federal MP at the time.

And finally his statement that an ID card would be deliverable "at minimal cost and risk" simply has no basis.

The current British experience is sobering – cost estimates for their proposed national ID card have blown out to somewhere between £10.6 billion (\$24.2 billion) and £19.2 billion. That's just the direct implementation costs to government, not the cost to business of introducing compatible card readers.

And what would be the benefit? UK government estimates suggest only around £35 million pa would be saved in any reduction in identity fraud.

It just doesn't add up.

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