



**Australian  
Privacy  
Foundation**

---

## LETTER TO EDITOR

### Access Card will be our national ID

Australian Financial Review, 10 November 2006, p.79

Your article on the so-called Access Card may leave readers with the impression that the Government has somehow acted to prevent the card becoming a national ID card ("Hockey guards details from prying eyes", AFR, 9 November). Unfortunately that is not the case.

Contrary to the suggestion in the article, Mr Hockey has not "cut adrift private sector use of the device". In fact Joe Hockey said yesterday that "proposed legislation will prevent the card being required by a bank or other organization as the only allowable form of identification. People may, however, *choose* to use the access card to assist in proof of identity at those locations."

So that just means that both government agencies and businesses can ask to see your Access Card, but they must also offer you an alternative way to prove your identity. This is just stating the obvious, as banks and the like will always need to cater for temporary visitors to Australia who are not eligible for Medicare - but all of whom will have passports. So there is nothing to stop your bank, video rental store, post office or anyone else saying "no Access Card or passport, no service". Since passports can't be easily carried around in your wallet, the Access Card will become the all-purpose identity card of choice.

Furthermore Mr Hockey announced he would not accept the fundamental recommendation of the Consumer & Privacy Taskforce, headed by Professor Fels, that each person's unique national identity number not be visible on the card itself. Having your national identity number, clearly visible on the face of a card that almost everyone will carry with them and have to produce on request, is the easiest means by which disparate information about you can be combined by governments and businesses. No-one needs to hack into Hockey's 'secure' chip or the database - he is printing the keys to your identity there in black and white, for all the world to see, and steal.

The Government has finally shown its true colours on the so-called Access Card. This will be a national ID card, plain and simple.

Anna Johnston  
Chair, Australian Privacy Foundation