



**Australian
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Background reports available from:
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MEDIA RELEASE

The advertising campaign you won't be seeing

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Amongst the blizzard of propoganda from the Howard government, one piece will be missing: the promised and overdue public awareness campaign on the new Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Finance (AML-CTF) law.

"This might just be because the government could be embarrassed, during the federal election campaign, to announce the death of financial privacy in Australia," said Nigel Waters, Policy Coordinator for the Australian Privacy Foundation

From mid December this year, the AML-CTF Act 2006 will require even more draconian customer identification requirements for not only banks and other financial institutions but also casinos, bookmakers, accountants and solicitors. Next year, the Howard government planned to add real estate agents, financial planners and jewellers to the list – thousands of small businesses will have to comply with complex and confusing rules, quiz their customers on their motives, and dob in people on very subjective grounds of 'suspicion'. If the government is returned, that will go ahead.

Nigel Waters explained, "Many thousands of Australians are already on secret black lists maintained by the AUSTRAC agency and available to more than thirty Australian law enforcement and other agencies including the Tax Office, Centrelink, Customs and Immigration, as well as to many overseas agencies. And there is no way for citizens to have wrong information ever removed from those lists. The information held by AUSTRAC can be used for a wide range of purposes not even remotely connected to money-laundering or terrorism investigations. The title of the law is simply dishonest and misleading."

The government promised an awareness campaign to accompany the introduction of the new requirements coming into force this December. The campaign has been planned, PR firms engaged, and communications formats and distribution methods agreed.

Waters said "It could have been approved by a Ministerial committee and by both major parties so that it could proceed during the election campaign. Conveniently, the government failed to obtain the necessary approvals so that under the 'caretaker convention' the campaign cannot proceed until after the election – by which time the new requirements will be just around the corner. "

"Could this be because the new laws not only mean the death of financial privacy for all Australians, but also because they will impose a huge burden on thousands of small businesses? Not a good news story – so while you will see millions of dollars wasted on negative ads, you won't find out how much further the government is prying into your financial affairs until it is too late," said Waters.

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