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MEDIA RELEASE

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Conroy's Media Proposals are Late, Timid and Inadequate

"Which is worse – the government's limp, half-hearted proposals that fail to rein in excessive media privacy intrusion, or the feral outcry against them?", asks APF Chair Roger Clarke.

"After years of enquiries and debate, and continued evidence of media malpractice, the media are still not being held to account for privacy intrusions".

The proposed mechanism for enforcement of the media's own inadequate privacy guidelines is far weaker than those recommended by the Finkelstein Inquiry.

The second privacy-relevant element of Conroy's package also fails the test completely.

The privacy right of action is not just about the media. After 40 years, it's clear that the courts are incapable of developing a privacy tort. The need has been demonstrated, the public wants it, and the design has been clearly articulated by three Law Reform Commission Inquiries. Matters of genuine public interest will always be open for reporting by the media.

"The APF strongly supports and values bona fide journalism", said Dr Clarke. "Where disclosure of personal data is a necessary part of holding governments and corporations to account, privacy invasion is justified. But the public interest must not be confused with mere commercial motives".

The Opposition's behaviour in the matter is also reprehensible. It has joined in the media's gross over-reaction to the government's proposals, putting short term political advantage ahead of the long term public interest in a balanced co-regulatory scheme

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Relevant APF Policies

The Media: <http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/Media-0903.html>

The Right of Action: <http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/PRoA.html>