



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

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26 September 2007

Mr A. Barr
Minister for Education
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Barr

Re: Swipe Cards in Schools

I refer to the report in The Canberra Times of 9 September 2007 regarding the possibility of using monitoring technologies in ACT schools. I note that you sounded a note of caution.

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) is the country's leading privacy advocacy organisation. A brief backgrounder is attached. The APF applauds your 'wait and see approach', as the reporter described it. However, we believe that the idea warrants much more positive action than merely monitoring progress in other jurisdictions.

Data collection and management are essential in school administration, and there could conceivably be benefits in the use of cards of some kind as part of school information systems. But many of the designers of products, and particularly the high-pressure salesman at Academy Photo, are being seriously irresponsible and blindly following where technology leads them.

Our children need supportive and encouraging environments. Demonstrating to them from the outset that society distrusts them, and that surveillance of their behaviour is the norm, are perfect ways to breed young people who regard 'the system' as being against them, who are suspicious of authority, and who are alert to ways to get around the system.

In the event that any consideration is given to implementing products like this, the APF urges that a full-scale Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) be undertaken. As you are aware, all actions by the ACT public sector are subject to the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). The Privacy Commissioner's Officer has published guidance in relation to the conduct of PIAs.

Yours sincerely

Roger Clarke
Chair, Australian Privacy Foundation
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Australian Privacy Foundation

Background Information

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) is the primary association dedicated to protecting the privacy rights of Australians. The Foundation aims to focus public attention on emerging issues which pose a threat to the freedom and privacy of Australians. The Foundation has led the fight to defend the right of individuals to control their personal information and to be free of excessive intrusions.

The APF's primary activity is analysis of the privacy impact of systems, and proposals for new systems. It makes frequent submissions to parliamentary committees and government agencies. It publishes information on privacy laws and privacy issues. It provides continual background briefings to the media on privacy-related matters.

When necessary, the APF conducts campaigns against specific proposals. It works with civil liberties councils, consumer organisations, professional associations and other community groups as appropriate to the circumstances. The Privacy Foundation is also a participant in Privacy International, the world-wide privacy protection network.

Where possible, the APF cooperates with and supports official agencies, but it is entirely independent – and often critical – of the performance of agencies set up to administer privacy legislation.

The APF's Board comprises professionals who bring to their work deep experience in privacy, information technology and the law.

The following pages provide access to information about the APF:

- papers and submissions <http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/>
- resources <http://www.privacy.org.au/Resources/>
- media <http://www.privacy.org.au/Media/>
- Board-members <http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Contacts.html>

The following pages outline several campaigns:

- the Australia Card (1985-87)
<http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Formation.html>
- the Medicare Smart Card (2004-06)
http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/MedicareSmartcard.html
- the Human Services Card (2005-06)
http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/HSCard.html
- the Australia Card Mark II (2005-06)
http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/NatIDScheme.html
- the Human Services 'Access Card' (2006-)
http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/HSAC.html