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Senator The Hon. Ian Campbell
Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Dear Senator Campbell

Congratulations on your appointment to the large and important Human Services portfolio.

You thereby inherit the 'Access Card' Project. This has been seriously misconceived by the public servants it was entrusted to, and is indistinguishable from a national identification scheme. As the public gradually becomes aware of the real nature of the proposal, it will become a serious liability, in an election year, on your watch.

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) has long experience in relation to attempts by the public service to gain power over the population by breaking down data silos and identity silos. The APF was instrumental in the defeat of the Australia Card, ran successful campaigns in relation to the predecessor proposals to the 'Access Card', and conducts analyses and provides frequent media briefings in relation to the current project.

There are ways in which the design of the 'Access Card' scheme could be adapted to achieve reasonable objectives in relation to the authentication of clients of Human Services agencies, while protecting those clients' privacy.

I and other APF Board-members would be pleased to meet with you to provide a briefing on the reasons why the project as currently conceived is doomed to failure, and how it can be converted into a form that public interest organisations, the media and the public will support. We suggest that this would be of greatest effect if it were conducted in the presence of your personal advisors but the absence of the public servants who have created the problem in the first place.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Roger Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with some overlapping loops.

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. It aims to focus public attention on emerging issues that pose threats to freedoms and privacy. The APF 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. APF is also a participant in Privacy International, the world-wide privacy protection network. Where possible, 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 relevant campaigns:

- the Australia Card (1985-87)
<http://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-)
This page is about to be re-launched with substantial new content