



SENATOR THE HON. JOE LUDWIG

Minister for Human Services
Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator for Queensland

C08/1507

Dr Roger Clarke
Chair
Australian Privacy Foundation
GPO Box 1196
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Dr Clarke

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2008 regarding the Access Card project of the previous Government.

In reference to your support for a smartcard-based scheme, I would like to reiterate that the previous Government's Access Card initiative has been abolished.

In relation to your request for a copy of the full Health and Social Services Smart Card Business Case prepared by KPMG and other Access Card documents that have not been made public, I have been advised by my department that, by convention, material prepared to inform the policy deliberations of the previous Government is not made available to the new Government unless it has already been made public or is simply factual material. I am, therefore, unable to review or provide copies of the full KPMG Business case or the other Access Card documents prepared for the previous Government that you referred to.

While the Australian Privacy Foundation may be disappointed that the Government will follow "convention", I am sure you are aware the entire system of cabinet government depends on adherence to these same functions. If you would like more information about the application of convention to cabinet government, I refer you to paragraphs 1.1 and 7.34 – 7.37 of the Commonwealth Cabinet Handbook, available at www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/index.cf.

The Rudd Government's primary objective is delivering improvements in Health and Social Services, reductions in fraud and payment leakage and better protecting customer information. While this Government will not resurrect an initiative similar to the Access Card, I am certainly interested in meeting with relevant stakeholders, including your organisation, in due course to obtain views on alternative strategies to improve service delivery.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely


JOE LUDWIG
Minister for Human Services

13.5.08