



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

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13 May 2008

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister

The Hon Wayne Swan MP, Treasurer

Dear Ministers

Re: Common Registration Process

As you are probably aware, the Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) has served the public interest for the last two decades. It was instrumental in ensuring that the public and the media were sufficiently well-informed about the previous Government's Access Card that the scheme collapsed.

I refer to the report in The Australian of Tuesday 13 May 2008 headed 'Government plans central citizen database'.

In it, the ATO's CIO is quoted as saying that a "common registration process" is being developed among customer-facing agencies. The reporter says it is for the purpose of improving information sharing, and would involve "a centralised database to host and manage all Australian citizens' personal details, so this information can be easily shared and accessed by any department".

Your Government was elected on a platform that included close-down of the 'Access Card' project, and strong opposition to a national identification scheme in any form. That these statements have apparently been made by a senior executive, and apparently on behalf of multiple agencies, is of enormous concern. Consequently, the APF calls upon you to repudiate these statements immediately, and to instruct all agencies that no such scheme is to be developed during the terms of the Labor Government.

Notwithstanding the proximity of this report to the release of the Budget, the media will be in contact with us continually on this matter. It would accordingly greatly assist us if you would issue a statement along the above lines very quickly, thereby ensuring that we are in a position to 'hose down' the issue rather than inflame it.

Transparency in relation to the development of privacy-threatening schemes is crucial. We indicated to Mr Ludwig in March that the APF looks forward to constructive engagement in the emergent project to develop an appropriately privacy-protective smartcard-based scheme. Regrettably, however, we have yet to receive a substantive response to that letter (copy attached).

Yours sincerely

Roger Clarke
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27 March 2008

Senator Joe Ludwig
The Minister for Human Services

Dear Senator Ludwig

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) was an active participant in the public debates about the previous Government's Access Card project. We congratulate you on your prompt and unequivocal cancellation of that project.

The APF would be pleased to support a smartcard-based scheme that has the features outlined in http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/HSAC-FAQ11.html. The APF looks forward to constructive discussions with your team as it progressively develops, publishes, consults on, and revises its proposals.

On the other hand, we note with disappointment your statement to the Senate on 13 March 2008, to the effect that the Rudd Government will be honouring the 30-year convention in relation to the pivotal KPMG document, even though the reason for declaring it to be an appendix to a Cabinet Submission was to suppress the information in it. We understand this to be not a legal constraint, but a decision of the Cabinet: <http://www.cabinetrecords.dpc.wa.gov.au/index.cfm>.

A range of other documents were paid for from tax-payers' funds, finalised, but never released to the public. Among them was the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) prepared by Clayton Utz, and related advice from Pacific Privacy. Minister Hockey initially agreed to release the Clayton Utz PIA (on 9 May 2006), before renegeing (on 24 May 2006). Other relevant documents include the final business case, the high-level description of the design, subsequent privacy analyses, and presumably other documents that were provided to tenderers. It does not appear that these documents are subject to Cabinet-document protection.

Given the likelihood of a new card scheme being developed, access to all of the documents that the previous Government suppressed, or partially suppressed, is in the public interest. We accordingly request that you arrange for as much as possible of all of these documents to be made available.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to constructive engagement on this matter.

Yours sincerely

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