



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

<http://www.privacy.org.au>

Secretary@privacy.org.au

<http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Contacts.html>

15 July 2015

The Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Minister for Defence
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

menzies@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re: Security Clearance Data

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) is the country's leading privacy advocacy organisation. A brief backgrounder is attached.

We understand that the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency (AGSVA) falls within your portfolio.

We note the serious concerns arising in the United States following the revelation that data gathered and stored in the context of security clearance processes has been accessed in bulk by an unauthorised person or persons.

The APF has long urged the imposition of meaningful security standards on organisations. Statements of our policy position are attached.

The public has cause to be very concerned that similar vulnerabilities may exist in relation to Australian security clearance data. We believe that information is needed in order to clarify the situation in this country.

Would you please advise:

1. Is security clearance data consolidated into a single physical or virtual database?
2. Are identifiers, are authenticators, and are biometrics, included within the stored data?
3. How long after the initial application is security clearance data retained in any form that is accessible online?
4. How many people, or what proportion of the working population, are currently represented in the collection?
5. What information security risk processes are applied, including Threat/Risk Assessments, Privacy Impact Assessments, Security Management Plans and audits?
6. What security safeguards are implemented?
7. Is there a mandatory scheme whereby breaches are reported to the Privacy Commissioner or some other appropriate agency with meaningful regulatory powers?
8. Is appropriate information about those breaches published?

We appreciate that there may be some published documents that address at least some of these concerns, such as PIA reports, and ANAO or other audit reports. We would of course be pleased if, as part of your response, you could direct us to them and/or provide us with copies of them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Clarke', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Roger Clarke
For the Board of the Australian Privacy Foundation
(02) 6288 6916 Roger.Clarke@privacy.org.au

Attachments:

- APF Policy Statement on Information Security
<https://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/PS-Secy.html>
- Submission #1 re the OAIC's Guide to Information Security
<https://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/OAIC-InfoSecy-1301.pdf>
- Submission #2 re the OAIC's Guide to Information Security
<https://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/OAIC-InfoSecy-1408.pdf>

Australian Privacy Foundation

Background Information

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) is the primary national association dedicated to protecting the privacy rights of Australians. The Foundation aims to focus public attention on emerging issues that 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.

Where possible, the APF cooperates with and supports privacy oversight agencies, but it is entirely independent of the agencies that administer privacy legislation, and regrettably often finds it necessary to be critical of their performance.

When necessary, the APF conducts campaigns for or 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 an active participant in Privacy International, the world-wide privacy protection network.

The APF is open to membership by individuals and organisations who support the APF's Objects. Funding that is provided by members and donors is used to run the Foundation and to support its activities including research, campaigns and awards events.

The APF does not claim any right to formally represent the public as a whole, nor to formally represent any particular population segment, and it accordingly makes no public declarations about its membership-base. The APF's contributions to policy are based on the expertise of the members of its Board, SubCommittees and Reference Groups, and its impact reflects the quality of the evidence, analysis and arguments that its contributions contain.

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

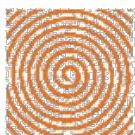
The Board is supported by Patrons The Hon Michael Kirby and Elizabeth Evatt, and an Advisory Panel of eminent citizens, including former judges, former Ministers of the Crown, and a former Prime Minister.

The following pages provide access to information about the APF:

- Policies <http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/>
- Resources <http://www.privacy.org.au/Resources/>
- Media <http://www.privacy.org.au/Media/>
- Current Board Members <http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Contacts.html>
- Patron and Advisory Panel <http://www.privacy.org.au/About/AdvisoryPanel.html>

The following pages provide outlines of several campaigns the APF has conducted:

- The Australia Card (1985-87) <http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Formation.html>
- Credit Reporting (1988-90) <http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/CreditRpting/>
- The Access Card (2006-07) http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/ID_cards/HSAC.html
- The Media (2007-) <http://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/Media/>



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

The association that campaigns for privacy
protections

Information Security

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APF Policy Statement on Information Security

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The privacy interest shares a great deal of common ground with organisations' own needs for protection of data of financial and competitive value, with commercial confidentiality, and with government and national sovereignty desires for the protection of sensitive data.

Information and Information Technology Security are well-established fields of professional endeavour, supported by a substantial array of products and services and a busy industry.

Organisations have moral and legal obligations to apply the available knowledge and to thereby ensure privacy protection. This applies to:

- all government agencies at federal, State and Territory, and local levels
- large and medium-sized business enterprises and not-for-profit organisations
- small business enterprises and not-for-profit organisations that handle personal data
- service-providers, including to small organisations and consumers, where the services provided involve personal data that is under the control of the service-provider's customer (particularly personal health records and credit-card data, but also, for example, records of goods and services purchased, social media, dating services and business-contact lists)

The following, specific obligations exist, must be recognised by organisations throughout the public and private sectors, and must be enforced by regulatory agencies.

Security Governance

All organisations have obligations to:

- conduct Information Security Risk Assessment (SRA), which identifies and evaluates threats, vulnerabilities and potential harm, including a focus on risks to the privacy of individuals whose data the organisation handles
- establish an Information Security Risk Management Plan (SRMP), which specifies the information security safeguards that are to be established and maintained, including safeguards against risks to the privacy of individuals whose data the organisation handles
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Security Safeguards

All organisations have obligations to establish and maintain a sufficiently comprehensive set of information security safeguards in the following areas, commensurate with the sensitivity of the data:

- Physical Access Controls, such as locks, and authorisation processes for entry to premises
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Resources to guide and support the design and implementation of effective safeguards include:

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Sanctions

All organisations, and individuals within organisations, must be subject to sanctions where they fail to fulfil their information security obligations.

Sanctions must exist, and must be applied, at all of the following levels:

- civil liability by organisations
- civil liability by directors
- staff disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal in serious cases
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7 January 2013

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
G.P.O Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
consultation@oaic.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam

**Re: OAIC Guide to Information Security
Consultation Draft – December 2012**

The Australian Privacy Foundation's Submission on this matter is attached.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Vice-Chair, for the Board of the APF
0414 731 249, vicechair1@privacy.org.au

Australian Privacy Foundation

OAIC Guide to Information Security Consultation Draft – December 2012

SUBMISSION

4 January 2013

Introduction

The APF's Policy Statement on Information Security forms an integral part of this Submission. A copy is attached and the original is at <http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/PS-Secy.html>.

Briefly, the APF argues that all organisations have moral and legal obligations to apply the available knowledge about information security in order to ensure privacy protection. Obligations are identified in the area of security governance and security safeguards.

The Board is generally quite positive about the current draft of the OAIC Guide.

The APF submits, however, that it falls short of the current need on several key aspects, and that it will be of far greater value to organisations and individuals alike if it is enhanced in the following ways.

More Direct Guidance Is Needed

On page, 1, the document declares as a Key Message that "This guide provides guidance on information security, specifically the reasonable steps entities are required to take ...".

But in fact it does not require that any steps be taken. The key passages on p. 14 merely say "Appropriate security safeguards and measures for personal information need to be considered ... This could include [list of safeguards] ... This section outlines examples ...".

It is untenable for any organisation to not provide minimum levels of safeguards for data of value, including personal data. It is essential that the OAIC communicate that to organisations.

APF submits that:

- (1) **The document needs to be revised to provide more direct guidance relating to the minimum safeguards** that are required, together with references to documents that contain more detailed advice on specific security safeguards.
- (2) **The document needs to be revised to make very clear that privacy-sensitive personal information must be subject to additional safeguards**, well beyond the minimum safeguards, that address risks that arise in the particular context.

Direct Statements Are Needed About Enforcement

The document contains very little about enforcement actions and penalties.

The public understands the benefits of adopting a primarily positive approach, encouraging good organisational practices, and guiding organisations towards them.

However, the public also knows that many organisations fail to respond to positive approaches. The public accordingly expects the OAIC to exercise all enforcement powers at its disposal, and to put organisations on notice that it does so. The document fails to communicate a forceful message to organisations about enforcement of the requirements. Worse, nothing in the document provides the reader with any confidence that the OAIC will take the action necessary to achieve change.

The APF submits that:

(3) The document needs to be revised to project the following additional Key Messages, and provide supporting information:

- security safeguards are a mandatory requirement of the law, not optional;
- organisations that fail to implement the basic set of well-known safeguards for personal data are *prima facie* in breach of the Privacy Act, and are subject to enforcement actions; and
- organisations that handle privacy-sensitive personal information but fail to implement additional safeguards appropriate to the risks involved, are in breach of the Privacy Act, and are subject to enforcement actions.

Complementary Activities Are Needed

The Guide has existed since 2001. Yet there are continual breaches of the law. It is clear that, by itself, even an updated Guide is not sufficient to achieve the necessary substantial improvements in organisational practices.

The APF submits that:

(4) The OAIC needs to reinforce the messages in the Guide with complementary activities, including:

- reminders through industry associations and the media that inadequate personal data security has adverse consequences, including:
 - breaches of the Privacy Act, harm to individuals, and consequential enforcement actions by the OAIC and the courts, including financial penalties
 - breaches of other laws, and consequential enforcement actions by other regulatory agencies, including financial penalties
 - reputational harm among the general public and through the media
- reminders through industry associations and the media that all organisations must implement well-known information security safeguards
- statements through industry associations, professional associations and the media that audits need to include, as a core focus, compliance with privacy laws and norms
- much more active use of all processes and sanctions available to the Commissioner, including 'naming and shaming' of organisations that fall short of the requirements
- public warnings of the likelihood of greatly increased public concern arising from such factors as continual data breaches, abuse of personal data by social media services, the risks involved in cloud computing, and the looming threat of 'big data'



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13 August 2014

Mr T. Pilgrim
The Privacy Commissioner
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
G.P.O Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
consultation@oaic.gov.au

Dear Timothy

Re: Revised Guide to Information Security – August 2014

The APF is pleased to take the opportunity to provide a Submission on this matter.

The APF draws attention to its Submission on the previous version of the Guide, including the APF's Policy Statement on Information Security. A copy is attached, and forms part of this Submission.

The revised version of the Guide has a range of positive aspects, which the APF welcomes.

However, the APF submits that the position adopted falls far short of what the situation demands.

It is abundantly clear that large numbers of organisations have seriously sub-standard security arrangements in place.

It is inadequate to merely offer 'steps and strategies which may be reasonable to take'.

The APF makes the following specific submissions:

1. The Guide needs be amended in order to:
 - 1.1 explicitly place the **onus on every organisation** to provide a minimum set of security safeguards for personal data;
 - 1.2 indicate **specific measures**, the absence of which will give rise to a *prima facie* case that the organisation is in breach of APP 11.
It would of course be open to the organisation to dispute that it is in breach, but it would be necessary for the organisation to present evidence, in particular in the form of a suitably documented and detailed risk assessment and risk management plan;
 - 1.3 indicate that a **PIA, in conjunction with an Information Security Risk Assessment / Threat Risk Assessment**, is essential in circumstances involving sensitive personal data, and strongly advised in all circumstances.
2. The Guide needs to be amended to make clear that, although the primary audience is entities that are subject to the Privacy Act, **the Guide is relevant to every organisation** that handles personal data.

3. The statement that "A breach of an entity's information security obligations **may** ... result in [action]" (our emphasis) is too weak, and needs to be strengthened.

To many organisations, this reads as an open invitation to ignore their obligations. The statement needs to make clear that **a breach of the law is subject to enforcement actions**.

The APF acknowledges that the Office's resources are constrained, and that actions have to be prioritised. That is a practicality, however, whereas the Guide needs to communicate the principles.

4. The Guide needs to be amended to declare the availability to the Commissioner of **civil penalty powers under ss. 80U-80ZG, which under s.13G are applicable in the case of serious and of repeated breaches of APP 11**.

Organisations must be informed that the long holiday (26 years for agencies and 14 years for private sector organisations) is finally over, and their behaviour is now subject to formal regulatory powers.

5. Given the current circumstances, it would be beneficial to frame the document in terms of 'the Privacy Commissioner' or 'the Privacy Commissioner's Office' (or 'office') rather than 'the OAIC', in order to avoid confusion if the Government proceeds with its announced intention to disestablish the OAIC.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

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Chair, for the Board of the Australian Privacy Foundation
(02) 6288 6916 Chair@privacy.org.au



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- Formal Audit of data protection measures

Resources to guide and support the design and implementation of effective safeguards include:

- Andress J. (2011) 'The Basics of Information Security' Syngress, www.syngress.com, 208 pp.
- Clarke R. (2013) '[Information Security for Small and Medium-Sized Organisations](#)' Xamax Consultancy Pty Ltd, 2013
- PCI-DSS (2010) '[Payment Card Industry \(PCI\) Data Security Standard: Requirements and Security Assessment Procedures](#)' Version 2.0, PCI Security Standards Council, October 2010
- ISM (2012) '[Information Security Manual – Controls](#)' Defence Signals Directorate, 2012
- ISO/IEC 27001:2006 'Information technology — Security techniques – Information security management systems – Requirements', Annex A, pp. 13-29
- Goodrich M. & Tamassia R. (2011) 'Introduction to Computer Security' Addison-Wesley, 2011, 576 pp.

Sanctions

All organisations, and individuals within organisations, must be subject to sanctions where they fail to fulfil their information security obligations.

Sanctions must exist, and must be applied, at all of the following levels:

- civil liability by organisations
- civil liability by directors
- staff disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal in serious cases
- criminal liability for serious and repeated cases

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