

AUSTRALIAN PRIVACY FOUNDATION

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Australian Privacy Foundation

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27 February 2003

John Brogden
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW
pittwater@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Brogden

Removal of Toll Booths

We are concerned that you may have overlooked the very significant privacy implications of removing toll booths from motorways, bridges and tunnels in and around Sydney (refer to your press release of 4 February 2003). Given your party's longstanding interest in privacy issues and many supportive positions in the past, we can only assume that this is an oversight.

While we understand the economic and convenience benefits of your proposal, it would have the unfortunate and unacceptable, effect of creating a database of traffic movement by recording payments readily linked to personal details of owners and drivers, and subsequently providing information about the movement of citizens through tolls. This would turn the metropolitan area road system into a practically unavoidable surveillance system. The database could also become available for undesirable secondary uses and to the risk of unauthorised use. We must retain the option of cash or totally anonymous payment of tolls.

We are already most concerned that the Western Sydney Orbital and the Cross City Tunnel are apparently being designed without a cash payment option, and we will be writing to the operators, the government and the NSW and federal Privacy Commissioners about this. To the extent that the operators of the tollroads will be private businesses subject to the federal Privacy Act, there is a very real prospect that failure to offer a cash payment option would breach the Anonymity principle NPP 8. Your proposal would compound the privacy intrusion.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Julie Cameron

Secretary, Australian Privacy Foundation