



**Australian  
Privacy  
Foundation**

## 2005 BIG BROTHER AWARDS

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Worst privacy invaders named at Big Brother Awards

Tuesday 8 November 2005 == **Embargoed until 5:00 PM 8/11/05** ==

Can our governments be trusted to protect our fundamental rights to privacy? See for yourself. Our judges have. The verdicts are in for this year's winners of the annual *Big Brother Awards*.

"The *Big Brother Awards* are for corporations, public officials and governments that have shown a blatant disregard for Australians' privacy," said Australian Privacy Foundation Chair, Anna Johnston, today.

The winners of the *Big Brother Awards* were announced in Melbourne this evening. The Award ceremony was hosted by the Australian Privacy Foundation, the leading non-government organisation dedicated to protecting the privacy rights of Australians.

And the winners of 2005's **Privacy Invader Awards** (a.k.a. "The Orwells") are ...

#### 1. **Greatest Corporate Invader** – *for a corporation showing a blatant disregard of privacy:*

- Winner: **Telstra** - for their Employee Monitoring and Surveillance policy.
- Runner up: CAMM Pacific - for extracting medical information from GPs' computers, for sale to pharmaceutical companies.
- Special Mention: Dunn and Bradstreet - for its relentless campaign for full file credit reporting

#### 2. **Most Invasive Technology** – *for a technology that is particularly privacy invasive:*

- Winner: **Health Communications Network** - for allowing extraction of medical information from GPs' computers, for sale to pharmaceutical companies.
- Runner-up: Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft - for developing government ID systems to allow the tracking of citizens' access e-government services.

#### 3. **Boot in the Mouth** – *for the most appalling contribution to debate a privacy-related topic:*

- Winner: **Senator Amanda Vanstone** - for proposing a National ID Card to divert attention from the Cornelia Rau immigration bungle.
- Runner-up: Queensland Premier Peter Beattie - for doing the same.

#### 4. **Worst Public Agency or Official** *for an agency or official with a blatant disregard of privacy:*

- Winner: **Senator Julian McGauran** - for disclosing personal details from a woman's medical file (concerning an abortion) in pursuit of an ideological agenda.
- Runner up: Victoria Police - for repeated incidents of unauthorised disclosure of personal information from their LEAP database.

The judging panel noted that Senator McGauran's actions were "a gratuitous breach of the privacy of a private citizen for blatantly ideological reasons – and a substantial misuse of parliamentary position and authority".

**5. People's Choice** – *for individual or organisation most frequently nominated by the public:*

- Winner: The **Australian Bureau of Statistics** - for proposing to link census data on Australians over time, retrospectively, and match with data from other sources.

**6. Lifetime Menace** – *for a privacy invader with a long record of profound disregard for privacy:*

- Winner: The **NSW Government** – for failing to appoint a replacement Privacy Commissioner for more than two and a half years.

“A government which is committed to privacy will ensure that there is an effective and adequately staffed and resourced Privacy Commissioner. It is hard to believe that it should take anywhere near this time to find a suitable person”, said the judging panel.

“The NSW Government's failure to appoint a permanent Privacy Commissioner has meant no real scrutiny of either NSW or federal proposals for their impact on privacy, including the new terrorism laws. This is evidence of the NSW Government's ongoing hostility to transparency and accountability”, said the judges.

The winners of 2005's positive **Privacy Defender Awards**

(a.k.a. “The Smiths”, after George Orwell's 1984 hero, Winston Smith) were:

**1. Best Privacy Guardian** - *for a meritorious act of privacy protection or defence:*

- Winner: ACT **Chief Minister Jon Stanhope** - for posting the draft *Anti-Terrorism Bill* on his website, enabling scrutiny of measures for secret police surveillance
- Runner-up: Federal backbench **MP Stephen Ciobo** - for being the first Coalition MP to speak out against the idea of a national identity card

Speaking on the winners of the Best Privacy Guardian award, the judging panel stated “it is reassuring to find politicians who still uphold the values of transparency and who acknowledge the value of public debate”.

**2. Lifetime Achievement** – *for provision of outstanding services to privacy protection:*

- Winner: **Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja** - for continually standing up for privacy

The judges noted that Senator Stott-Despoja's record on privacy protection included:

- “initiating the Senate review of the *Privacy Act*,
- speaking out against the census proposal,
- calling for the deletion of the political party exemption from the *Privacy Act*,
- calling for laws to protect genetic privacy, and
- speaking out against a National ID Card, recognising that an identity card would be extremely unlikely to offer protection against a terrorist attack on Australia”.

The judges of the 2005 *Big Brother Awards* were:

- Chris Puplick, former NSW Privacy Commissioner and former Liberal Senator
- Moira Paterson, Senior Law Lecturer, Monash University
- Dr Peter Chen, Lecturer in Media Communications & Australian Studies, Monash University
- Wendy Bacon, Associate Professor in Journalism, University of Technology, Sydney
- Elizabeth Beal, Director of the Communications Law Centre, Victoria University

Guest speaker at the Awards was Brian Walters SC, President of Liberty Victoria. Mr Walters spoke on “privacy in an age of fear”, focusing on the implications of John Howard's proposed new powers to allow secret surveillance, arbitrary detention and restricted communications and movement for those who may be innocent of any crime.

For more details, and online references about the how the winners beat the field, see:

**[www.privacy.org.au/bba/2005/winners.html](http://www.privacy.org.au/bba/2005/winners.html)**

(The APF's Australian *Big Brother Awards* have no relationship to the TEN Network TV program of a similar name.)

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