



**Australian
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MEDIA RELEASE

Privacy advocates slam NSW Govt proposal: “an identity card by another name”

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The NSW Government’s proposal to introduce a new photo ID card would prove to be an all-purpose identity card, “compulsory in effect, if not in law,” said APF Chair Anna Johnston.

The Australian Privacy Foundation has today released its analysis of the NSW Government’s proposal to introduce a photo ID card for non-drivers.

The Government’s proposal is set out in the Photo Card Bill 2004, which is due to be debated in this session of Parliament.

Community concerns used to create a ‘Big Brother’ system

“Community groups have for years been asking for a simple form of photo ID for people without a driver’s license or passport. But instead of designing a card to meet their needs, the Government has designed a system to suit itself – a real Big Brother system.”

“We believe the model proposed in this Bill will not help the people who most need a photo card – and it will pose significant personal security risks for card holders. In fact the proposal has extremely serious privacy implications for *all* NSW residents,” Ms Johnston said.

“What is really disturbing is that this Bill enables the RTA to develop a centralised identification database covering the entire adult population. Whether you are carrying a driver’s licence or this new ‘Photo Card’, your information and transactions can be linked through the use of a unique identifying number. This is the type of Australia Card proposal that the public have so strongly rejected in the past – just hidden in a different disguise”.

The basis of an identity card system

The problems with the Bill, outlined in the APF’s analysis published today, are:

- the scheme will make identity cards compulsory in effect, if not in law
- yet it will not solve the problem of giving all adults fair access to goods and services, because the Bill allows the RTA to deny some people even an ID card because of their driving record or criminal record

- the proposal is to create a central identity database, capturing information about virtually every NSW resident over the age of 16
- the Bill allows the government to collect and keep *any* information about people on a central database
- the Bill places few limits on who can get access to information from the database (e.g. the Bill allows government agencies in other States and Territories to have access)
- the scheme effectively creates a 'unique identifier' for each NSW resident over the age of 16, making it easier for government and business to track and profile each person's transactions and movements
- it could undermine efforts to tackle identity theft and fraud

No response from Costa

"It has been almost 2 months since we first wrote to Mr Costa, seeking a meeting to discuss our concerns and offer sensible alternatives – but we've had no reply" said Ms Johnston. "We've sent Mr Costa a list of 31 questions about the Bill, but so far he hasn't answered any of them."

"We are extremely disappointed that the Government hasn't met with us and other community organisations to look at alternatives. We're also concerned about the lack of public consultation before this Bill was introduced."

"We call on the Opposition and minor parties to join forces to make the major amendments needed, to ensure that the privacy implications are resolved."

~ end of release ~

APF's *Review of the Photo Card Bill*:

<http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/NSWIDCardAnal0502.pdf>

APF's *31 questions for the NSW Minister for Roads about the Photo Card Bill 2004*:

<http://www.privacy.org.au/Papers/NSWIDCard31Qns0502.pdf>

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About the Australian Privacy Foundation

The Australian Privacy Foundation is the main non-governmental organisation dedicated to protecting the privacy rights of Australians. The Foundation aims to focus public attention on emerging issues which pose a threat to the freedom and privacy of Australians.

Since 1987 the Foundation has led the defence of the rights of individuals to control their personal information and to be free of excessive intrusions. For further information see www.privacy.org.au

Since 2003 the Australian Privacy Foundation has also hosted the Australian *Big Brother Awards*, which are presented around the world to corporations, public officials and governments that have shown a blatant disregard for privacy, and those who have done the most to threaten personal privacy in their countries.