

Smartcard must have safeguards, community consultation

CLA welcomes the proposed smartcard, provided it's used to help Australians with their health and not to spy on people.

The Government must come clean on the real reason for the card – keeping “inter-operable” records on people, across all arms of Government.

“Fourteen federal government departments and agencies have been meeting in secret for more than three (3) years to make any smartcard work right across every government entity,” Civil Liberties Australia (ACT) President, Dr Kristine Klugman said.

“And there has been not one word of community consultation on the card over all that time.”

The smartcard is designed to track your spending (Tax), check whether you're cheating on the system (Centrelink), monitor the pharmacy pills and potions you use (Medicare), count how many times you go to the doctor, and for what (Health), ensure a widow has not remarried (Vet's Affairs), spy on de facto relationships (Family Services) and check where you've applied for work, or if you resigned rather than were sacked (Employment and Workplace Relations).

“And that's just for starters,” Dr Klugman said.

“We should be using new technology to improve people's lives, not to act as 24-hour a day spy-hole into people's private lives.

“There must be a permanent Safeguards Monitor to supervise how the Government matches data to make sure it doesn't abuse the privilege of holding people's private health and other personal details.

“The Government has been working in secret on this proposal for more than three years, with 14 Government departments and agencies involved.

“They are up to version No. 19 of a 100-page report* which is entirely and totally aimed at making any government smartcard work right across every government department and agency.

“This means that every piece of government data on any one person will be able to be linked, instantly,” Dr Klugman said.

“There has not been one scrap of community consultation over those three years – that's why we're afraid that the Government will just barge into keeping tabs on all aspects of your life, and my life, without any community-endorsed safeguards in place.”

Civil Liberties Australia (ACT) Inc. A04043
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** Australian Government Smartcard Framework, Version 0.19 DRAFT, 16 Dec 05*

Smartcard: What the Government's own 'Framework' document says

Here are quotes from the Federal Government, from a document released on 16 December 2005, proving that it is not a health card that is being introduced, but a whole of government (including all agencies, and State Governments) card, with links to the banking industry.

The announced 'health and welfare' card is a very thin edge of a very wide wedge, Civil Liberties Australia president Dr Kristine Klugman said today (Wednesday 26 April 2006)

This information below is all taken directly from the document, issued in December 2005, entitled:

Australian Government Smartcard Framework

http://www.agimo.gov.au/infrastructure/smart_cards

...and download the PDF file.

QUOTES from the Government's Framework document:

p 10 of 96, 1st dot point:

The (Australian Government Smartcard) Framework

"articulates a minimal set of mandatory requirements to optimise smartcard interoperability across all parts of government"

p10 of 96, 2nd set of dot points:

The goals of the Framework are to:

(2nd dot point)

* optimise the interoperability of smartcard deployment across the Australian public sector..."

(that is, across State Governments as well - see p13 of 96):

Intergovernmental head agreements – these agreements have been endorsed across jurisdictions and provide the basis for the use of **cross-jurisdictional smartcards**.

p16 of 96:

1.5.3, 3rd para of section:

Smartcard deployments within agencies that involve financial applications should also look at **interoperability with commercial banking systems**. Business agreements may need to be established for public and **private applications**..."

p60 of 96, 3rd para:

"Australia does not have a formal legislative data protection regime."

p61 of 96, first line:

Card security, like any security, is never perfect. Cards may be lost or stolen. It should be assumed that attackers will devote considerable time and resources to attempting to break into a card...or to duplicate it.

Last para on page:

Agencies should consult with the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) if in any doubt.

COMMENT:

CLA supports the introduction of smart technology to help Australians with their health, but not for spying into people's private lives.

CLA calls for extensive community consultation, and for the establishment of a Safeguards Monitor body to keep a constant watch on government abuse of people's private data.

CLA also calls for setting up a formal legislative data protection regime...which the Government's own document admits is missing.

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