



Committee concludes inquiry into access to journalists' metadata

Parliament's joint intelligence and security committee has tabled a short report today to formally conclude its inquiry into the authorisation of access to telecommunications data to identify a journalist's source.

The Committee's inquiry followed its earlier completion of an inquiry into the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Bill 2014, which was passed by the Parliament on 26 March 2015.

In its report on the Bill, the Committee had recommended that it be tasked with undertaking a separate inquiry on the 'question of how to deal with the authorisation of a disclosure or use of telecommunications data for the purpose of determining the identity of a journalist's source'.

Since the referral of that inquiry, however, amendments were made to the Bill to introduce a journalist information warrant regime and to establish the position of a Public Interest Advocate for the purposes of making submissions to the warrant issuing authority.

The amended Bill also provides that the Committee will be notified of the issuing of any journalist information warrants, and will have the opportunity to request briefings from the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security on any reports produced in relation to those warrants or authorisations. The number of journalist information warrants and the number of authorisations issued under those warrants will also be included in an annual report, which the Committee will be able to review.

Given these developments, the Committee determined to conclude its formal inquiry on the matter.

A copy of the report can be accessed via the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/pjicis>.

For media comment, please contact the Office of the Chair, Dan Tehan MP, on 6277 4393 (Parliament House) or 03 5572 1100 (Electorate).

For inquiry information, please contact the Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 2360 or email dataretention@aph.gov.au.