Members of the JCIS

I write to propose an alternative approach to data retention.

As the current proposal under consideration stands, communications carriers would be obliged to preserve copies of metadata for 24 months.

There are in my view valid concerns about this proposed practice relating to:
- its cost
- intrusion into citizens' privacy
- security of the data, in particular who has access.

However, this customary list ignores the key benefit of metadata in *preventing* a crime, rather than just facilitating its *prosecution*.

My proposal would be that the Australian Federal Police collect and store metadata on behalf of all Federal and State police and Security Forces and Agencies (and no one else), and that they actively develop the capability to analyse these data in real-time, and share the results in real-time.

The budget which might be assigned to multiple communications carriers could be spent on employment of the really clever writers of suitable algorithms for matching data that Australia has in abundance.

If this were done, we could dispense completely with concerns about appropriate access and the intervention of civil courts.

Also, the very well known and widely deplored lack of interaction between law-enforcement agencies (perhaps best seen in their counterparts in the US) could be obviated.

But there is an issue here, namely that though this alternative approach may save money and protect the data, and though this would over time provide real-time mapping of criminal connections (and I think pre-detect criminal activity), how would we then protect our privacy?

This is the key to my submission. We need a relatively simple "data collection" device which has built-in a process for anonymising the data. In this way the data could be analysed in real-time and stored, with complete specificity, but all "ciphers of interest" could only be converted into references to real persons of interest with court warrant. In this way we remove the potentially devastating delay in observing the traces of illegal activity in the metadata, while protecting our privacy.

Just for good measure, I have simulated this data collection device with mock data on a Raspberry Pi for the Committee's examination if they are interested.

Dr Geoffrey Jenkins