



Australian Coalition for Economic Justice

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**TO: Standing Committee on Legal
and Constitutional Affairs**

Submission:
***Inquiry into the Privacy Amendment
(Private Sector) Bill 2000***

Inquiry into the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Bill 2000

As a representative body for a number of diverse organisations including pensioner organisations, unions, church social justice groups and small and independent businesses we are concerned that the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Bill 2000 is deliberately full of holes that favour business, particularly big business and international business.

We view with concern the words used in the Information Paper on page one: “is compatible with the European Union Directive on the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data ***and on the Free Movement of Such Data to remove any barriers to international trade.***”

We are also concerned about the media accessing such files even under the public’s right to know.

The Australian Coalition for Economic Justice (ACE-J) believes that the individual’s right to privacy is paramount over any marketing research or media access illegal or otherwise. The fact you would put into law that the media would not be prosecuted or forced to reveal their source makes a mockery of the entire act. This would only encourage leaks. We are adamant that individuals have full control over submitting personal information to any data base and that it also be absolutely essential that it be voluntary.

Individuals must have control over how their personal information is used, particularly in an era of corporate domination of society.

We note also that health information can be released “only for the purposes of research where absolutely necessary and under strict controls”. Once again we do not believe this information should be made available to ANYONE without the express permission of the individual or individuals concerned. Insurance companies are already making claims that they should have access to any such information as, no doubt, would multinational pharmaceutical corporations. We oppose these organisations receiving any personal information under any circumstances.

Employee records should only ever be available to employers and the employees and information should only be relevant to the job.

In this age of free trade, privatisation of everything from jails to water, and with minimal government interference we would suggest that the track record of business seeing beyond its corporate profit is dismal. We do not believe that business being its own policeman will work. If there is to be such a data base then it should be overseen by an independent government body with very strict limitations imposed as to who can be given any personal information.

We wonder too about exemptions. We understand that there are powerful lobby groups wanting exemptions under "special circumstances". As we see it exemptions can easily make the entire exercise a joke.

There should also be provision for individuals to check out the information companies have about individuals and also what is already stored in any government or private national database. Individuals should be able to have their data removed at anytime if they so choose.

Yours faithfully

John Morris

for the Australian Coalition for Economic Justice.