

Business Alert !

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ALRC proposes overhaul of federal privacy laws

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) today released a blueprint with 301 proposals for overhauling Australia's "complex and costly" privacy laws and practices.

ALRC President Prof David Weisbrot said: "The federal Privacy Act sets out different principles for private organisations and for government agencies. On top of that, each state and territory has its own privacy laws or guidelines and some also have separate laws on health privacy. The ALRC is proposing there be a single set of privacy principles for information-handling across all sectors, and all levels of government.

"The protection of personal information stored or processed overseas...is another serious concern. The ALRC wants to ensure that such information has at least the same level of protection as is provided domestically."

The ALRC also proposes the removal of the exemption for political parties from the Privacy Act and the introduction a new statutory cause of action where an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy has been breached

Other key proposals include:

- Abolishing the fee for 'silent' telephone numbers
- Expanding the enforcement powers of the Privacy Commissioner
- Imposing civil penalties for serious breaches of the Act
- Introducing a more comprehensive system of credit reporting

The ALRC is seeking community feedback on these proposals before 7 December 2007.

The full Report can be downloaded from the ALRC website: www.alrc.gov.au

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