

MEDIA RELEASE

CITIZENFOUR SCREENING FOR MPS – DECISION MAKING ON MANDATORY DATA RETENTION AND SURVEILLANCE IN AUSTRALIA

Monday 9/2/15

*Powerful insights into the astonishing dimensions
and significance of metadata collection and analysis*

The Councils for Civil Liberties and Electronic Frontiers Australia have invited the nation's MPs and staff to attend a special screening of the powerful documentary **CITIZENFOUR** by award winning director Laura Poitras in Parliament House on Monday.

We do so in the context of the Government's contentious data-retention bill in the spirit of open debate.

The documentary explores the Edward Snowden revelations about mass data collection and surveillance by the US intelligence agencies and their FiveEyes allies. It also explores Snowden's reasons for his actions- with full knowledge of the likely devastating personal implications. In doing so, it provides powerful insights into the astonishing dimensions and significance of metadata collection and analysis.

Why Parliament House?

We think this timely documentary will help members of Parliament better understand what is at stake if the Government's current data retention bill is implemented in Australia – whatever their personal views of Snowden.

The issues in the bill are very complex – the implications hard to understand. The growth and transformation of telecommunications technology and personal 'metadata' is so fast that non-geeks must make a deliberate effort to get a meaningful understanding of what is being proposed and its implications.

CITIZENFOUR is centrally relevant to the core issue: should democracies collect and hold mass telecommunications data on everyone for subsequent access by government and its agencies? What is the cost to privacy and other freedoms? Will it make us safe



Queensland Council
for Civil Liberties



**Australian Council
for Civil Liberties**



**ELECTRONIC FRONTIERS
AUSTRALIA**

from terrorism and major crime?

The issues

The Government insists its plan to collect and retain telecommunications ‘metadata’ on most Australians is nothing new; does not involve sensitive ‘content’ and has no major threats for personal privacy, freedom of the press, free speech or the right to dissent.

In short – it is of no great significance to the ordinary citizen.

None of these assurances are true.

Much is new: extensive details of personal life are captured and the implications for individuals and society are huge – both in terms of privacy and other core freedoms.

This will be the first time Government determines exactly what telecommunications data must be collected and kept for all users of the net and mobile phones. Previously data was collected by telecommunication providers for business purposes.

The scope and informative value of ‘metadata’ is vastly greater than it was when the telecommunications legislation was passed and is constantly and rapidly expanding.

Every aspect of a person’s life can be deduced from ‘metadata’. Experts insist there is no longer any meaningful distinction between ‘metadata’ and ‘content’ data.

It is a serious issue ordinary citizens should be concerned about, when Government treats all citizens as potential suspects and collects and holds their personal data ‘just in case’.

The proposed data retention regime will seriously constrain journalists and an effective free media and intimidate legitimate whistle-blowers.

A state that spies on all its citizens, constrains its journalists and intimidates legitimate whistleblowers will have trouble sustaining a robust democracy.

Why MPs might be interested

Many of the parliamentarians who will decide if mass data retention becomes the norm in Australia are not likely to fully understand the technology detail and therefore what is at stake. It is possible some members of the critical parliamentary committees reviewing this bill may not understand as much as they should.

We have organised this special pre-release screening of **CITIZENFOUR** in Parliament House to make it easy for MPs and their staff to attend and get some insights into the significance of mass collection of telecommunications meta-data across the democratic world – in the spirit of open debate.

We invite MPs and their staff to avail themselves of the opportunity to watch this highly relevant documentary before they consider whether they should vote for a data retention regime to capture the communication metadata of most Australians.

This screening has been crowdfunded by hundreds of individuals, and is being made possible with the support of Madman Entertainment, the Australian distributors of this award-winning film. Pre-release screenings of **CITIZENFOUR** in Sydney and Melbourne last week were packed out with young and deeply engaged audiences.

We note that Monday the 9th may be memorable for another event in Parliament House – but the data retention debate will bring us back to core policy issues – and may be more important in the longer term than any leadership crisis.

Dr Lesley Lynch

Secretary NSWCCCL on behalf of the combined CCLS and EFA

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