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REGULATOR LETS THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG: DATA RETENTION NOT JUST ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY

“The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s demand to access Attorney-General Nicola Roxon’s proposed data retention regime reveals how dangerous this regime could be,” said Simon Breheny, Director of the Rule of Law Project at the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

The ACCC admitted on Friday that it wanted to use the government’s proposed regime for its regulatory investigations into issues like petrol pricing.

“Data retention policies are concerning enough by themselves.

“But the ACCC has revealed that the government is using the threat of terrorism as a Trojan horse to give expanded powers to government bodies that have nothing to do with national security.

“The government says it wants to ensure that the trade-off between security and privacy is not disproportionate. Allowing regulators access to the data would be way over that line. The ACCC has no right to use evidence that has been collected for the purpose of national security investigations,” said Mr Breheny.

“The practical effect of a data retention regime would be to create an Orwellian bank of private information on all Australian citizens.”

“If we give security agencies more power, non-security regulators like the ACCC and the Australian Taxation Office will inevitably gain access to all Australian’s private data. This is just another reason the data retention regime cannot be passed,” said Mr Breheny.

Mr Breheny presented evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry into National Security Reforms on Wednesday last week.

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