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MANDATORY INTERNET DATA RETENTION TREATS ALL AUSTRALIANS LIKE CRIMINALS: IPA

"The federal government's proposed mandatory data retention scheme will be repressive and expensive. It is a fundamental threat to all Australians' privacy and online freedoms," said Chris Berg, policy director of the free market think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs, this morning.

Media reports today confirm that the federal cabinet has approved a policy to require all internet service providers to retain 'metadata' on their customers' online activities as part of the government's anti-terror legislative reforms.

"Mandatory data retention treats all Australians as suspected criminals, storing away records of their internet activities just in case, in the future, they are accused of criminal activity.

"Far from a targeted anti-terrorism measure, data retained under the government's policy will be available for any law enforcement agency pry into.

"Metadata is nothing less than a complete record of a person's internet activities - and through that their personal and business life. Claims that 'only' metadata will be collected completely misunderstands the nature of digital communications," said Mr Berg.

Last week the internet service provider iiNet pointed out the high cost of data retention for ISPs, costs which will have to be passed onto customers.

"The last few decades have shown us that after these sorts of policies are introduced they are incredibly hard to repeal", said Mr Berg.

Mr Berg, along with the IPA's Legal Rights Project director Simon Breheny, appeared in front of the Parliamentary Inquiry into National Security Reforms in September 2012 when mandatory data retention was first considered by the Gillard government.

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