



Media release

11 March 2014

Privacy laws change tomorrow

Important changes to the *Privacy Act 1988* commence on 12 March 2014.

The changes include a new set of Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) that will regulate the handling of personal information by Australian Government agencies, businesses with a turnover of more than \$3 million or those trading in personal information and all private health service providers.

There are also changes to the credit reporting provisions of the Privacy Act and new regulatory powers for the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC), including the power to conduct a privacy performance assessment, accept an enforceable undertaking and, in the case of serious or repeated breaches, seek civil penalties.

‘These are the most significant changes to privacy laws in over 25 years and affect a large section of the community. The world has changed remarkably since the late 1980s when the Privacy Act was first introduced, and so the changes were required to bring our laws up to date with contemporary information handling practices, including global data flows,’ said Australian Privacy Commissioner Timothy Pilgrim.

The OAIC will continue to work with Australian Government agencies and businesses to assist them with the reforms.

‘The OAIC recognises that government agencies and businesses are working hard to implement the new requirements. Our focus in the months following 12 March 2014 will be on working with entities to ensure that they understand the new requirements and have the systems in place to meet them,’ Mr Pilgrim said.

Entities looking for information about the reforms can access guidance on the OAIC’s website.

The new laws require businesses and Australian Government agencies to be more transparent about how they handle personal information. Entities need to have a clearly expressed and up to date privacy policy about the way they handle personal information.

‘Being up front with customers and having good privacy practices in place makes good business sense. It is also consistent with community expectations. The OAIC’s recent community attitudes to privacy survey revealed that 96% of Australians feel that they should be informed about how their information is handled and protected. Over 60% have decided not to deal with a business due to concerns as to how their personal information will be used, and 23% have decided not to deal with a government agency,’ Mr Pilgrim said.

The OAIC received 10,576 privacy enquiries and 1496 privacy complaints in 2012–13 and has already received 30% more complaints in the financial year to date.

The OAIC will focus on public education about the reforms during the upcoming Privacy Awareness Week campaign (4–10 May 2014), the primary privacy awareness and education event in the Asia Pacific region.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:
Leila Daniels, Media Manager (02) 9284 9695 and 0407 663 968 or media@oaic.gov.au.

Background notes for Editors

For more information on privacy law reform, see: <http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-act/privacy-law-reform>

The full report for the **OAIC's 2013 Community Attitudes to Privacy survey** results can be accessed here: <http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-resources/privacy-reports/oaic-community-attitudes-to-privacy-survey-research-report-2013>

Privacy Awareness Week (4–10 May 2014) is the primary privacy awareness and education event in the Asia Pacific region. For more information see <http://www.oaic.gov.au/news-and-events/privacy-awareness-week/privacy-awareness-week-2014>