



Balancing personal freedom and community protection

Keeping the community safe and maintaining personal privacy and freedoms will be canvassed at a public hearing on Wednesday, as part of an Inquiry into the use of section 313 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

The House Standing Committee on Communications will hear evidence from two organisations that question the need for section 313 of the Act, which gives Australian government agencies the ability to obtain assistance from the telecommunications industry when upholding Australian laws.

Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA) regards section 313 as a “dangerous impediment to Internet freedoms” and recommends that it be struck out completely, or, if retained, be restricted to law enforcement, national security agencies, and possibly oversight agencies such as ASIC.

The Australian Privacy Foundation (APF) is opposed to section 313 in its current form and believes its misuse has an adverse impact on Australians’ privacy. The APF says the section should be re-written to establish due process and appeal rights, and to remove conflicts and confusion between the diverse subject matter comprising law enforcement, crime prevention and national security.

Committee Chairman, Jane Prentice said, “The Committee is conscious of the wide range of views within the community about the need for balance between personal freedom and community protection—especially in the internet age. The Committee expects that by testing a range of views on the use of section 313, we will be able to find the right balance between the rights of citizens and the responsibilities of government agencies.”

Details of the hearing are as follows:

Date: Wednesday, 4 March 2015

Time: 8:00 am

Venue: Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra

Further information about the Inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to prepare a submission can be obtained from the Committee’s website at www.aph.gov.au/section313 or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 2352.

For media comment: please contact the Committee Chairman, (02) 6277 4426 or (07) 3378 1599

Further information: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 2352, email ic.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee’s webpage at www.aph.gov.au/section313