



PREMIER OF TASMANIA

21 MAR 2018

Mr Andrew Hastie MP
Chair
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hastie 

Thank you for your letter inviting the Tasmanian Government to provide a submission to the review of the *Identity Matching Services Bill 2018* and the *Australian Passports Amendment (Identity-matching Services) Bill 2018*.

As the committee is aware, the Tasmanian Government signed the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Identity Matching Services* (the IGA) in October 2017. The IGA, which includes a facial biometric matching and identification capability, reflects a shared commitment by all states and territories to protecting the safety and security of our citizens.

The IGA offers Tasmania access to passport, visa and citizenship images, and will make Tasmanian driver licence images available via a common facial recognition system hosted by the Commonwealth. Rather than create a single national database of all the images, the information will be accessed by sending queries through a central hub or exchange linked to different agency systems. It is important to note that Tasmanian driver licence images will continue to be controlled and managed by the Tasmanian Department of State Growth.

The facial biometric matching capability will help protect people from identity crime by strengthening processes for verifying a person's identity. Identity crime affects one in 20 Australians each year and costs in excess of \$2.2 billion. It is more common than assault, robbery, break-ins and motor vehicle theft. The system will not only reduce identity theft, but will also allow people to reclaim their identity faster, a process that currently can take victims over a year.

The biometric identification service will provide an important national asset for the investigation of serious crime including terrorism. Law enforcement access to the service will be limited to users in specialist areas who are trained in how to interpret the results. Law enforcement will only be able to use this service for investigations of more serious offences. For example, it can be used to identify a suspected paedophile from child exploitation material, or to identify an armed offender from a still image taken from CCTV footage. Importantly however, under the IGA, the service cannot be used to investigate crimes that carry a punishment of less than three years imprisonment.

The Tasmanian Government anticipates that the identity matching services will be a facilitator of innovative service delivery into the future. For example, digital verification of identity for government service provision is expected to have a range of possible applications. The service is also expected to assist victims of natural disasters who lose their identity documents to more easily verify their identity in order to receive relief payments and commence the process to replace lost documents.

The services under the IGA will be governed by a continuum of measures aimed at protecting people's privacy. Use is governed by legally binding participation agreements between the requesting and data holding agencies which, if breached, will result in the services being withdrawn. The Australian Government has advised that the services will have a range of technical access controls and procedures to prevent unauthorised information sharing. Annual audits will be conducted to ensure these important privacy safeguards are maintained. Contrary to some reports, the system does not provide for automated mass surveillance of public spaces or identify faces based on live CCTV feeds.

Yours sincerely

Will Hodgman MP
Premier