

Australia experiments with Saturation Surveillance

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An experiment that the world's police will watch closely.

A close-circuit video camera in every bank, on every shop front, every shopping mall, every train station, every local government camera, any private business with a camera centrally linked with live feeds to police command – not science fiction or a left-wing paranoia, but a reality in the Australian state of New South Wales that the world's police and security services will be watching closely.

This is New South Wales on Australia Day - a public holiday to celebrate what it is to be 'Australian'. The same day as there are 1,200 police on the beaches of Sydney following racist riots in December, the day after the Australian Prime Minister John Howard tells the National Press Club that he has won the culture wars and that Australia is the only country in the Western world that doesn't need a Bill of Rights, and that we need to have an Australia of 'one people, one destiny.' In the same state that telephone interceptions run at a rate 30 times greater than the USA.

The Daily Telegraph, a newspaper which often runs as a propaganda piece for NSW police, reported on January 26 as an 'exclusive' that 'banks, shops and any private business with a CCTV camera will be recruited into a state-wide digital spy network to counter terrorism, violent crime and rioting.' You can be confident it will also be used to monitor minor crime, activists and protesters.

A security blanket will be thrown over the state where thousands or tens of thousands of extra cameras will become part of the new system.

The Police Minister, Carl Scully, who belongs to the ruling Labor Party, said in an interview with the Daily Telegraph that he got the idea after returning from a meeting with the police Anti-Terrorism Branch in London. Yet in the name of terrorism, it is reasonable to think that the police will use the cameras to track the movements of anyone the government or its security services don't like. With current digital facial recognition technology, tested at selected airports around the world, this would be easy. There was no mention by Scully of any safeguards.

An audit is already underway to list how many cameras are used across the state and their locations. The fact, therefore, that this news was made public on Australia Day - a public holiday - shows the deepest cynicism and news manipulation. In evidence of further police manipulation of the media, there has been no official press release, only the Daily Telegraph exclusive interview with the Police Minister.

A database is being established to identify who owns each video camera, with targets set to arrange the live feeds and set minimum times for recording. There will be targets for the integration of the cameras with police command, with compatible software protocols and minimum standards for footage quality. Any costs by shop-keepers and others in upgrading and connecting their cameras will be met by the State. The logistics of doing this in just Sydney - a city with over 4 million people - are staggering.

Even Scully is not ashamed to admit that the videos will be used to monitor petty crime. "It has clear implications for the prevention and detection of other crimes. It is vital that we know exactly where every camera is and have arrangements in place to use every piece of footage."

Welcome to NSW on Australia Day. The world's police will be watching the Australian experiment very closely.

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-164.html>