

Star-Spangled Oz

by Lawrence Latif via Kismo - The Inquirer *Sunday, Jul 25 2010, 9:42am*

national / mass media / other press

Aussie Government censors its snooping plans

Makes you 'proud' to be Australian.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT has censored almost 90 per cent of the document that outlines its plans to snoop on its citizen's web browsing habits.

Obtained under a freedom of information (FOI) request, the 18 page document is mostly blacked out because the government believes it may result in a "premature unnecessary debate", perish the thought in a democracy.

The extent of censorship is so great that one can skim through pages without finding a single letter of text which has been spared from the censor's brush. It's not surprising that the proposal has been met with heavy criticism given that Australian internet service providers (ISPs) had been asked to store "certain aspects" of users' activities.

According to the Attorney-General's department legal officer Claudia Hernandez, the release of the document wasn't a good idea, "In my opinion, the public interest factors in favour of release are outweighed by those against." Hernandez cemented that viewpoint by saying that Aussies getting a sneak peak at the document could "more than likely, create a confusing and misleading impression". Of course releasing a document that has had 90 percent of its content concealed is sure not to arouse suspicion at all.

While there really isn't much to read in the document courtesy of Hernandez and her cronies, Blighty gets a mention. Trying to justify why it should snoop on its citizens, the document states that "The UK experience has also shown the availability of information can be of great benefit providing exculpatory evidence, allowing police to rule out a person from an investigation, and to Coroners in determining circumstances leading up to death." Death from Web browsing? Just how immersive can 3D monitors become?

One thing's for sure, given the Aussie Government's zeal to keep things under wraps for as long as possible, the proposal is likely to raise one heck of a fight once it does become public.

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