

19 May 2008

Data Communications Bill

Proposed government database

Jonathan Bamford, Assistant Information Commissioner, said:

'If the intention is to bring all mobile and internet records together under one system, this would give us serious concerns and may well be a step too far. We are not aware of any justification for the state to hold every UK citizen's phone and internet records. We have real doubts that such a measure can be justified, or is proportionate or desirable. Such a measure would require wider public discussion. Proper safeguards would be needed to ensure that the data is only used for the proper purpose of detecting crime.

'We have warned before that we are sleepwalking into a surveillance society. Holding large collections of data is always risky; the more data that is collected and stored, the bigger the problem when the data is lost, traded or stolen. Defeating crime and terrorism is of the utmost importance, but we are not aware of any pressing need to justify the government itself holding this sort of data. If there is a problem with the current arrangements, we stand ready to advise on how they can be improved, rather than creating an additional system to house all records.

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