

Dear Mr Brandis,

I feel kinda funny writing you this email. I'm sure you are being flooded thanks to the various social media campaigns and I doubt you will ever read this. Also I am a permanent resident of Australia, not yet a citizen and my word may be of lesser value to you.

I worked in telecommunications for over 10 years before moving to Australia, I have worked in IT as a programmer for over 20 years, so I know a little more about data retention than the average Australian citizen. But I am not an expert. However it is precisely because I am not an expert that I am sending this email.

The thing is, with my average knowledge I know the dangers data retention pose to my privacy as a law abiding individual residing in Australia. I know that if I chose to do so, I could use the meta data stored about a person to greatly damage that person's reputation. It would be invaluable to me in an attempt to steal someone's identity, it would be invaluable to me to discredit someone, it would be invaluable to me to get a look into someone's private life and all I need is a basic knowledge of telecommunications, of how the internet works, and I could enable that by something as "simple" as taking someone to court (or having someone else do so). And that is me, just imagine what someone who is an expert could do.

Luckily I am a law abiding person and I wouldn't do such a thing. Most people who know me think I'm way too much of a goody two shoes as it stands. But someone else who has a bone to pick with me might definitely go down that path.

But even if the new laws would have purpose the thing that really rubs me the wrong way the most is that with my average knowledge of IT I know how easy it is for anyone who does have mal-intent to circumvent the effectiveness of your data retention laws. I know how easy it is for someone who wishes to cover their tracks to make your data retention laws useless. The very people your laws are trying to put behind bars are the very people who if they are smart can get around them leaving you only with the ability to catch the very dumb criminals and the payoff is to put the privacy of myself and other law abiding citizens at risk. Is that really worth it?

I use a VPN when I need to connect to my office network to protect our business network from hackers but you're nicely catching my internet behaviour outbound from my office network here in Australia. Privately I don't use a VPN at all so you are recording my meta data without problems. I don't use TOR or similar services to cover my tracks. I have no need to do so, I am not breaking any laws and I trust that the law is on my side and will protect my privacy. But with these new laws, the law is failing me and many other law abiding Australians. It is making me wonder, should I start using such services? Or any of the many other options at my disposal? To protect myself from those who may want to harm me? From those who will abuse your new laws? Because that is exactly what your new laws mean to me.

Again I stress, I am not an expert, yet I know what I would need to do. If I were an expert I would have no trouble making any data captured by the government useless making your data retention laws pretty much void in capturing the real criminals while putting me at much greater risk.

I have been the victim of identity theft once before. Please don't make it more likely that I will be again.

Kindest Regards,

Bastiaan Olij