To the office of the Attorney-General,

I am writing to express my extreme concern over the floating of legislation to enable the use of data obtained via mandatory retention laws in civil suits.

I am currently working in the information management and technology sector, and my experience in this field has informed me as to the sensitive nature of data. Metadata can be readily used to reverse-engineer many personal details, as can be seen in the immense success of technologies such as Google's AdSense, which given only non-identifiable data is able to determine things like age, gender, interests, and frequently visited websites. This information, if improperly accessed, can be used to determine the identity of its subject by process of elimination. I therefore oppose the use of these laws in any context outside of urgent national security, with appropriate intelligence to justify this access beforehand.

I am also concerned by the Federal Government's goalpost shifting on these laws. The Government began by reassuring that the laws were only to be used for matters of national security, then the former Prime Minister suggested that the laws were "needed to keep our kids safe". Now your office is considering using this data for the settlement of civil cases. This represents a degrading of severity, and the reasons laid out in the above paragraph mean this deeply worries me.

Finally, I do not believe information obtained by the Government has any place in the settlement of civil lawsuits. They are just that -- civil. The Government must not in any way represent the interests of private parties, lest our country and our people serve those private interests.

I look forward to hearing your response, and I hope that you seriously consider the consequences of this proposal, raised by myself and many others, before taking it any further.

Yours sincerely,
Eleanor McMurtry