

Dear Minister Brandis,

I'm writing with regard to the proposed changes to metadata laws. While on the face of it, giving individuals and their lawyers access to others' metadata in civil actions. The ability of law enforcement agencies to access individual's metadata for purposes of criminal investigation is perfectly valid and should remain the only way that metadata can be accessed. Allowing access to others metadata in civil actions will allow abusive spouses to track their victims after they've left due to abuse. Consider, Minister, how such access by abusers and their lawyers will potentially increase the likelihood of more women dying at the hands of their spouse because the most dangerous time for a woman is not while they're in the family violence situation, but after they've left.

Granted, your portfolio isn't one dealing with crime, it's important that you consider the plight of domestic violence victims when looking at the possibility of changes to these metadata retention laws. Perhaps, you think this is hubris. But I can tell you as a victim of domestic violence and rape, I'm petrified that my abuser might be able to access my metadata if I should pursue a civil action against him because criminal changes were not pursued due to lack of evidence, but that doesn't mitigate the trauma I suffered and continue to this day, some 15 years later.

I implore you Minister to protect the rights and privacy of domestic violence victims so that they may escape situations of violence without fear that they might be tracked down by their abusers.

Regards,

Melisa Upton