

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Attorney-General must properly resource Information Commission**

*Canberra, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015*

EFA today calls on the Attorney-General to cease his absurd war of attrition with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Since announcing in 2014<sup>i</sup> that it intended to abolish the Office, the government has starved the agency of funds<sup>ii</sup> and has failed to reappoint two of the three statutory officer positions, despite the reality that it is unable to get its legislation to abolish the Office through the Senate.

Yesterday the Attorney-General announced that Timothy Pilgrim would be given a third three month appointment as Information Commissioner, while also holding the other statutory offices of Privacy Commissioner and Freedom of Information Commissioner.

Meanwhile, the Attorney-General is contesting Freedom of Information requests relating to his diary<sup>iii</sup> and to his own 'metadata'<sup>iv</sup>.

In contrast, on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Prime Minister announced that Australia would be re-committing to the Open Government Partnership<sup>v</sup>.

EFA Executive Officer Jon Lawrence said today, "The ongoing uncertainty that the government has created in the oversight of privacy and freedom of information must cease immediately. If Prime Minister Turnbull is serious about his commitment to open government, then he must direct the Attorney-General to promptly make long-term appointments to the three statutory officer positions – Information Commissioner, Privacy Commissioner and Freedom of Information Commissioner – as well as to provide proper funding to support these critical roles. Without this, the Prime Minister's commitment to open government must be seriously questioned."

EFA is a founding member of the Australian Open Government Partnership Network<sup>vi</sup>, an independent coalition of individuals and organisations formed for the purpose of engaging with government in this process.

#### **About EFA**

Established in January 1994, Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA) is a national, membership-based non-profit organisation representing Internet users concerned with digital freedoms and rights.

EFA is independent of government and commerce, and is funded by membership subscriptions and donations from individuals and organisations with an altruistic interest in promoting civil liberties in the digital context. EFA members and supporters come from all parts of Australia and from diverse backgrounds.



EFA's major objectives are to protect and promote the civil liberties of users of digital communications systems (such as the Internet) and of those affected by their use and to educate the community at large about the social, political and civil liberties issues involved in the use of digital communications systems.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/02/freedom-of-information-may-cost-800-as-coalition-seeks-to-abolish-regulator>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.itnews.com.au/news/pilgrim-details-state-of-play-at-oiac-408879>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-19/george-brandis-to-appeal-against-diary-access-order/7099756>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.crikey.com.au/2016/01/11/your-metadata-fair-game-but-brandis-own-off-limits/>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/country/australia>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.aogpn.net>