



## **NEW ADVOCATE FOR PRIVACY IN NEW ZEALAND**

Media Statement for immediate release - 8 May 2017

Today marks the public launch of the Privacy Foundation of New Zealand, an independent civil society group that has been established to help to advocate for people's privacy and personal information rights in New Zealand.

The Foundation aims to be a new and strong voice that offers independent, informed and fair public comment. It will help to keep an eye on government and business uses of our personal information, and will make statements on law and policy proposals where it sees a potential erosion of rights, or introduction of unnecessary intrusions. The Foundation will also conduct research on important privacy issues, as capacity permits.

Foundation members are all volunteers with expertise or interest in privacy issues. Its members include people from the business, IT, health and legal sectors, as well as from a variety of academic disciplines.

Former Privacy Commissioner Marie Shroff and Associate Professor Gehan Gunasekara of Auckland University Business School are the Chair and Deputy Chair of the newly formed organisation. Other founding committee members are Associate Professor Alex Sims (Auckland University Business School), Alida van Klink (Chartered Accountant, Auckland), and Kathryn Dalziel (Christchurch) and Katrine Evans (Wellington), both specialist privacy lawyers in private practice. We are pleased to announce that Dame Silvia Cartwright has agreed to be Patron of the Foundation.

Chair Marie Shroff said today "Control over our personal information is a crucial 21st century human rights issue. Hardly a day goes by without a fresh report of loss, carelessness or deliberate misuse of our information. Also, the complexity of our information environment leads many people to wonder how much control they have in the big data age. They are rightly worried about whether anything is off limits to government and business. They are concerned for the safety and rights of both themselves and their children.

"The Office of the Privacy Commissioner has a crucial and sometimes lonely role in upholding the Privacy Act 1993, in resolving privacy complaints from the public and working to influence government and business practice. While the Foundation is separate from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and our views may sometimes differ, we expect to be able to complement and support its work in most instances".

Deputy Chair Gehan Gunasekara said "The Foundation is an independent, voluntary organisation and its role will be to stand outside the system as an informed advocate for public rights. Protecting privacy rights in the digital age is now a priority which will benefit from more independent firepower."

The Foundation welcomes support from individuals, businesses and other organisations that respect privacy and individuals' rights to fair and lawful treatment of their personal information. See Foundation website [www.privacyfoundation.nz](http://www.privacyfoundation.nz) for details on how to join.

The Foundation is grateful for the generous contributions it has received to assist with its start up process, including donations from business and individuals.

Contact for media enquiries: Gehan Gunasekara phone 09 923 5218, (021 0743419 mob.); or email Marie Shroff - [marie.shroff@gmail.com](mailto:marie.shroff@gmail.com)

#### Background Notes for Journalists

\* The Privacy Foundation Committee is very grateful to Associate Professor Gehan Gunasekara of the University of Auckland Business School for his significant contribution in getting the Foundation off the ground, and to the Business School for providing some administrative support in the initial stages.

\* Foundation activities will include:

- public statements on data protection and privacy issues of public importance including policy issues and proposals;
- submissions to select committees of parliament including relevant legislation
- representations to relevant business, government and interest groups

\* The website gives the opportunity to join and or to provide support for the Foundation.

\* The Privacy Foundation New Zealand Incorporated is a registered incorporated society. Further information is available on its new website: [www.....](http://www.....)

\* The volunteer committee and group of individuals supporting the Foundation have a range of expertise, knowledge and interest in privacy issues. Officers are: Chair, Marie Shroff; Deputy Chair and Secretary, Gehan Gunasekara; Treasurer, Alida van Klink. Committee members: Alex Sims, Kathryn Dalziel and Katrine Evans

\* The Foundation is a voluntary group and will not be able to provide advice about individual privacy complaints. Similarly the Foundation will not have the capacity to answer individual enquiries from the public. It will refer any privacy complaints or enquiries to the Privacy Commissioner or elsewhere as required.

