



NZ First, Greens and Labour Show Pre-Election Signs of Intelligent Life on Privacy; National Unresponsive

Media Statement for immediate release - 22 August 2017

People are getting worried these days about their safety from scams, hackers, big data invasion, and just sheer careless data breaches. Protecting us in the digital environment is a big task now and for the future. Wouldn't you think major parties would at least have a position on it before the election? We thought we would find out if our political leaders have woken up to their responsibilities to help protect citizens from digital threats.

The Privacy Foundation NZ wrote (*the content of the letter is on our website under "Campaigns"*) to political party leaders in Parliament on 20 July asking a few brief election policy questions including: parties' general approach to protecting people's information especially online; whether they would continue the current government policy of requiring charity groups to provide information about clients as a condition of providing them with funding; whether they will pass very overdue improvements to protections in the Privacy Act; and their views on oversight of intelligence agency surveillance on New Zealanders.

We asked for replies by 7 August, so we could publish the results of our brief policy survey for the information of voters before the election.

This is what we found.

Party Responses

Over the past few weeks, New Zealand First, the Green Party and Labour provided us with the informative responses below. (*The party responses are on our website under "Campaigns"*)

All three parties gave a strong general commitment to protecting personal information and respecting privacy. Some other highlights were:

- Labour says we are now lagging behind the rest of the world because of stalled Privacy Act reforms, and commits to implementing most of the Law Commission proposals to strengthen consumer protections.

- All three parties also disagree with collection of individuals' information from NGO agencies (This is planned in worrying current government proposals to force NGOs to provide information about individual clients - or have funding withheld.)
 - NZ First and Greens were also keen to see reforms to the Privacy Act to increase protection of consumers.
 - the Greens would like to see the right to privacy included in the Bill of Rights Act; and would like to see ICT vendors take more responsibility for user privacy
- National has failed to acknowledge or respond to our letter; from Maori, Act and United parties, the same nil response.

Our View

We are delighted to see three important political parties in New Zealand, Labour, New Zealand First and Greens, rising to the challenge of protecting New Zealanders in the digital age.

If we receive further responses we will promptly put them up on our website, or provide further commentary on policies or lack of them. Watch this space!

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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 website: www.privacyfoundation.nz
- * 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.