

**Launch of the Privacy Training Program, Parliamentary  
Theatrette  
12.30pm, Wednesday 21 August 2003**

**Speech by Barbara Perry, MP**

**[Check against presentation]**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

I must start by conveying the Attorney General's apologies for not being able to attend today.

However, I am very excited to be here today on behalf of the Attorney to launch the Privacy Training Program. For those of you who do not know, I have been a member of the Privacy Advisory Committee for a year now and have a keen interest in the work of Privacy NSW.

Privacy can mean many things to many people. Privacy means that the victims of domestic violence can start a new life again without the fear of being haunted by their past. Privacy means that witnesses can give vital information but still feel protected and safe. Privacy means that judges and police can do their jobs without being victims of personal vendettas and revenge.

For many of us, privacy boils down to much more simple, everyday situations. Some of us just don't like having to provide our mobile numbers and email addresses every time we fill out a form. None of us like the feeling that our private lives are being intruded upon. How many times do we sit down to dinner and have the phone ring with someone who wants "Just a few minutes of our time to answer some questions...."?

The dangers of inaccurate use of information can be even more disturbing.

- Error on your credit rating
- Teacher accused of paedophilia

Privacy is not just about protecting the individual; it is about how we function as government and as a society. In law enforcement, the protection of informants means that criminal law can be properly enforced. In the health sector, anonymity and confidentiality means greater trust and also improved public health. As we move more and more to a service society, better information means better-targeted services and less waste of valuable time and resources. Privacy and the protection of personal information is as much a key to good business as it is the key to good government.

Our challenge as government is to build on the balance of privacy, accountability and transparency. People must have confidence in this balance. On one hand, they must know that government is working effectively to provide services and security in a transparent manner. On the other, we must also be able to trust the government to uphold the respect of each individual's rights, including the right to privacy.

When people's private information is involved, this trust can only be achieved through a commitment to the fair and responsible handling of personal information. In 1998 the Carr Labor Government demonstrated that commitment with the introduction of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act.

The Act is a guide by which the competing interests of government and private life are met, and it guides the way that a government agency works on a day-to-day level.

This is of course all very good in theory, but how about in practice? How does government balance the various competing interests that happen in every day decision-making?

Many of you here are Privacy Contact Officers within your organisations. As the first port of call for privacy matters, you are in the front line of a very important challenge. You aim to see that the PPIP Act is implemented in your agency. You are also an important resource within your own agency, helping staff understand that privacy laws also affect the way they work on a day-to-day level. This is no mean feat.

We know that this can be a difficult task – knowing how to balance and apply the various information management laws like privacy, 'freedom of information' and records management, in everyday situations.

That's why this Privacy Training Program is going to be so valuable. In setting out the Act in a clear and concise way, and in providing concrete examples, it is fulfilling a clearly identified need in NSW public service agencies and in councils.

The Privacy Training Program will assist State and Local Government agencies in administering the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act. Heightened awareness of what privacy protection means for both the organisation and the individual will lead to better service for the people of NSW.

In sending his apologies, the Attorney General sent a message of support for this event and program. He states:

*Today the protection of privacy just got a little bit easier.*

*I congratulate both Privacy NSW and the Department of Commerce on the excellent interactive Privacy Training Program. This is a fantastic joint government initiative to protect the privacy rights of the people of NSW.*

I would like to join in his congratulations to both organisations

The NSW Government is committed to harnessing the benefits of information technology, while also respecting the trust placed in government by the community. This training program is a fine example of this marriage of information technology and promoting privacy awareness and rights.

I commend this Privacy Training Program to you, and I am therefore very pleased to officially announce its launch.

I am pleased to introduce Robert Wheeler, Deputy Director General from the Department of Commerce.