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1976

Wanganui Computer Centre  
Act 1976

(Privacy Commissioner,  
1998: 337-338)

# Necessary and Desirable

## *Privacy Act 1993 Review*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT OF  
THE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER ON THE  
FIRST PERIODIC REVIEW OF  
THE OPERATION OF THE PRIVACY ACT

3rd

land, New Zealand, from Skylab



# Summary of Contents

	PAGE
CONTENTS	III
PREFACE	XV
OVERVIEW	
Introduction	1
Background	13
PART BY PART ANALYSIS	
PART I: Preliminary provisions	27
PART II: Information privacy principles	57
PART III: Privacy Commissioner	109
PART IV: Good reasons for refusing access to personal information	145
PART V: Procedural provisions relating to access to and correction of personal information	175
PART VI: Codes of practice and exemptions from information privacy principles	203
PART VII: Public register personal information	231
PART VIII: Complaints	267
PART IX: Proceedings of Commissioner	291
PART X: Information matching	299
PART XI: Law enforcement information	337
PART XII: Miscellaneous provisions	349
SCHEDULES	369
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	373
APPENDICES	
A. Acknowledgments	389
B. List of submissions	393
C. Recent overseas privacy legislation	397
D. Legislative background	399
E. PCO drafting style changes	401
F. Reports to the Minister of Justice	403
G. Commissioner's functions under other statutes	405
H. Tables of equivalent provisions	409
I. List of public registers	413
J. Complaints graphs	415



# Contents

PARA		PAGE
	<b>SUMMARY OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>I</b>
	<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>III</b>
	List of figures	XIV
	<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>XV</b>
	<b>OVERVIEW</b>	
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
	<b>Review processes</b>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Commencement of the review</i>	2
	<i>Discussion papers</i>	2
	<i>Completion of the report</i>	3
	<b>Themes in the report</b>	<b>3</b>
	<i>Coverage of the Act</i>	4
	<i>Enhancement of individual rights</i>	4
	<i>Effectiveness of Office of the Privacy Commissioner</i>	5
	<i>Interaction with other laws</i>	6
	<i>Compliance and administration costs</i>	7
	<i>Ease of use of the Act</i>	8
	<i>“Adequate protection” in terms of the EU Directive</i>	9
	<b>Privacy at the end of the Twentieth Century</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	
	<b>International context</b>	<b>13</b>
	<i>Human rights origins</i>	13
	<i>Articulating privacy principles</i>	14
	<i>European Union Directive on Data Protection</i>	15
	<i>Relevance of international considerations to the review</i>	15
	<b>Technological context</b>	<b>15</b>
	<i>National and international responses to technology</i>	15
	<i>Some local technological issues</i>	16
	<i>Benefits to privacy of technology</i>	16
	<i>Relevance of technological issues to the review</i>	17
	<b>Economic context</b>	<b>17</b>
	<i>Origins of OECD interest</i>	17
	<i>Globalisation and harmonisation</i>	18
	<i>EU Directive on Data Protection</i>	19
	<i>Public sector reform</i>	19
	<i>Economic considerations in the review</i>	20
	<b>Legislative history</b>	<b>20</b>
	<i>Introduction</i>	20
	<i>The 1970s - Experimental national legislation</i>	21
	<i>The 1980s - International standard setting, local study and sectoral legislation</i>	22
	<i>The 1990s - Comprehensive privacy legislation</i>	23
	<i>Some reflections on legislative history</i>	25

## PART BY PART ANALYSIS

## PART I: PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

1.1	<b>Introduction</b>	27
1.2	<b>Drafting style</b>	27
	<i>Introduction</i>	27
	<i>General statutory format</i>	28
	<i>Parliamentary Counsel Office changes in drafting style</i>	29
	<i>Marginal notes and headings</i>	30
	<i>Section notes and endnotes</i>	32
	<i>Consolidated reprint</i>	33
	<i>Recommendations elsewhere in report</i>	33
1.3	<b>SECTION 1 - Short title and commencement</b>	33
	<i>Rapid commencement</i>	33
	<i>Delayed enforceability</i>	34
1.4	<b>SECTION 2 - Interpretation</b>	34
	<b>Agency</b>	35
	<i>Subparagraphs (b)(i) and (ii): Sovereign, Governor-General etc</i>	36
	<i>Subparagraph (b)(iii): House of Representatives</i>	36
	<i>Subparagraph (b)(iv): Members of Parliament</i>	37
	<i>Subparagraphs (b)(v) and (vi): Parliamentary Service Commission and Parliamentary Service</i>	39
	<i>Paragraph (b)(vii): Courts</i>	40
	<i>Subparagraph (b)(viii): Tribunals</i>	41
	<i>Subparagraph (b)(ix): Ombudsmen</i>	42
	<i>Subparagraph (b)(xiii): News media</i>	43
	<b>Collect</b>	46
	<b>Correct</b>	47
	<b>Document</b>	47
	<b>Individual</b>	48
	<b>Information privacy principle</b>	48
	<b>Permanent resident of New Zealand</b>	48
	<b>Personal information</b>	49
	<b>Public register</b>	49
	<b>Public sector agency</b>	49
	<b>Publicly available information and publicly available publication</b>	51
	<b>Statutory officer</b>	52
	<b>Working day</b>	52
	<b>New definitions</b>	53
	<b>Use</b>	53
	<b>Section 2(2)</b>	55
1.5	<b>SECTION 3 - Information held by agency</b>	55
1.6	<b>SECTION 4 - Actions of, and disclosure of information to, staff of agency, etc</b>	55
1.7	<b>SECTION 5 - Act to bind the Crown</b>	56

## PART II: INFORMATION PRIVACY PRINCIPLES

2.1	<b>Introduction</b>	57
	<i>Origins of the principles</i>	58
	<i>Principles or sections?</i>	58
2.2	<b>SECTION 6 - Information privacy principles</b>	59
2.3	<b>Principle 1 - Purpose of collection of personal information</b>	60
	<i>International origins and comparisons</i>	60
2.4	<b>Principle 2 - Source of personal information</b>	61
	<i>Rationale, origins and overseas comparisons</i>	61
	<i>Exceptions</i>	62
	<i>Notice to individual when collecting from another source</i>	63

2.5	<b>Principle 3 - Collection of information from subject</b>	<b>64</b>
	<i>Explanations required by principle 3(1)</i>	64
	<i>Purpose or purposes</i>	66
	<i>Principle 3(2) and (3)</i>	67
	<i>Exceptions</i>	67
	<i>Authorisation for non-compliance</i>	67
	<i>Statistical or research purposes exception</i>	67
2.6	<b>Principle 4 - Manner of collection of personal information</b>	<b>70</b>
2.7	<b>Principle 5 - Storage and security of personal information</b>	<b>71</b>
	<i>Recent international security safeguards developments</i>	71
	<i>Browsing or inspection of information</i>	73
2.8	<b>Principle 6 - Access to personal information</b>	<b>74</b>
	<i>Legislative history</i>	74
2.9	<b>Principle 7 - Correction of personal information</b>	<b>75</b>
	<i>Obligation to advise of right under principle 7(1)(b)</i>	76
	<i>Preventing use of information for purposes of direct marketing</i>	76
2.10	<b>Principle 8 - Accuracy, etc, of personal information to be checked before use</b>	<b>78</b>
	<i>Meaning of "use"</i>	79
2.11	<b>Principle 9 - Agency not to keep personal information for longer than necessary</b>	<b>80</b>
	<i>Other jurisdictions</i>	81
	<i>Other enactments</i>	81
	<i>Requirement to retain information</i>	82
2.12	<b>Principle 10 - Limits on use of personal information</b>	<b>84</b>
	<i>Exceptions</i>	84
2.13	<b>Principle 11 - Limits on disclosure of personal information</b>	<b>85</b>
	<i>Disclosure for enforcement of foreign laws</i>	86
2.14	<b>Principle 12 - Unique identifiers</b>	<b>87</b>
	<i>Rationale for principle 12</i>	88
	<i>The meaning of "assign"</i>	89
	<i>Limiting principle 12(2) to public sector unique identifiers</i>	90
	<i>Enforceability of principle 12(2)</i>	91
2.15	<b>SECTION 7 - Savings provision</b>	<b>92</b>
	<i>Subsections 7(1) to (6)</i>	93
	<i>Simplifying the savings regime</i>	93
	<i>Marginal note</i>	94
	<i>Dispersal of elements of section 7</i>	94
	<i>Sections 7(2) and (3) as they concern principle 11</i>	96
	<i>Restrictions on access in regulations</i>	98
	<i>Restrictions on access in other statutes</i>	99
	<i>The rump of section 7</i>	100
2.16	<b>SECTION 8 - Application of information privacy principles</b>	<b>101</b>
2.17	<b>SECTION 9 - Postponement of application of principle 11 to lists used for direct marketing</b>	<b>101</b>
2.18	<b>SECTION 10 - Application of principles to information held overseas</b>	<b>102</b>
	<b>Transborder data flows</b>	<b>102</b>
	<i>International approaches to transborder data flow issues</i>	103
	<i>EU Directive and transborder data flows</i>	104
	<i>Transborder data flow proposal</i>	106
2.19	<b>SECTION 11 - Enforceability of principles</b>	<b>107</b>
	<i>Private prosecutions</i>	107
 <b>PART III: PRIVACY COMMISSIONER</b>		
3.1	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>109</b>
3.2	<b>SECTION 12 - Privacy Commissioner</b>	<b>110</b>
	<i>Officer of Parliament</i>	110

	<i>Crown entity</i>	111
3.3	<b>SECTION 13 - Functions of Commissioner</b>	111
	<i>Function (a): Education and publicity</i>	111
	<i>Privacy hotline</i>	112
	<i>Written enquiries</i>	112
	<i>Written publications</i>	113
	<i>Newsletter</i>	113
	<i>Privacy Issues Forum</i>	113
	<i>Case notes</i>	113
	<i>Internet</i>	114
	<i>Participation in conferences</i>	114
	<i>Co-operation with commercial publishers and journals</i>	114
	<i>Code commentary</i>	114
	<i>News media</i>	114
	<i>Function (b): Audit of personal information</i>	114
	<i>Canada</i>	115
	<i>UK and Hong Kong</i>	116
	<i>NZ auditing</i>	117
	<i>Function (c): Monitoring use of unique identifiers</i>	118
	<i>Function (d): Directories of personal information</i>	119
	<i>Function (e): Monitoring compliance with public register principles</i>	119
	<i>Function (f): Examination of proposed information matching provisions</i>	119
	<i>Function (g): Educational programmes</i>	120
	<i>Seminar series with NZ Law Society</i>	120
	<i>Seminar series with other organisations</i>	121
	<i>Seminars and workshops</i>	121
	<i>Videotape</i>	121
	<i>Private Lives? Privacy and Disability Issues</i>	121
	<i>Function (h): Public statements</i>	121
	<i>Function (i): Representations from the public</i>	122
	<i>Function (j): Co-operation with others concerned with privacy</i>	122
	<i>Regional co-operation</i>	123
	<i>International co-operation</i>	124
	<i>Other co-operation</i>	124
	<i>Function (k): Suggestions for action</i>	124
	<i>Function (l): Advice to Ministers or agencies</i>	125
	<i>Function (m): Inquiry into enactments, practices, procedures, technical developments etc</i>	125
	<i>Function (n): Research and monitoring data processing and computer technology</i>	125
	<i>Function (o): Examination of proposed legislation</i>	126
	<i>Function (p): Report to Prime Minister on need for action</i>	127
	<i>Function (q): Report to PM on acceptance of international instrument</i>	127
	<i>Function (r): Report to PM on any other matter</i>	127
	<i>Function (s): Gathering information</i>	128
	<i>Function (t): Incidental or conducive functions</i>	128
	<i>Function (u): Other enactments</i>	128
	<i>Complaints mechanisms</i>	129
	<i>Approval of, and consultation with, Commissioner</i>	129
	<i>Appointment to other bodies</i>	129
	<i>Codes of practice and information matching</i>	129
	<i>Subsection (2)</i>	130
3.4	<b>SECTION 14 - Commissioner to have regard to certain matters</b>	130
3.5	<b>SECTION 15 - Deputy Commissioner</b>	131
3.6	<b>SECTION 16 - Term of office</b>	132
3.7	<b>SECTION 17 - Continuation in office after term expires</b>	132



3.8	<b>SECTION 18 - Vacation of office</b>	133
3.9	<b>SECTION 19 - Holding of other offices</b>	133
3.10	<b>SECTION 20 - Powers relating to declaratory judgments</b>	133
3.11	<b>SECTION 21 - Directories of personal information</b>	134
	<i>Worth of directory questioned</i>	134
	<i>Directory of Official Information</i>	135
	<i>Compliance costs</i>	135
3.12	<b>SECTION 22 - Commissioner may require agency to supply information</b>	136
3.13	<b>SECTION 23 - Privacy officers</b>	137
	<i>Appointment of outside privacy officers</i>	137
	<i>Privacy officer support</i>	138
3.14	<b>SECTION 24 - Annual report</b>	139
3.15	<b>SECTION 25 - Further provisions relating to Commissioner</b>	139
	<i>First Schedule: Clause 2 - Staff</i>	140
	<i>First Schedule: Clause 6 - Services for Commissioner</i>	140
3.16	<b>SECTION 26 - Review of operation of Act</b>	140
	<i>Bouquets &amp; brickbats - the review process</i>	144
 <b>PART IV: GOOD REASONS FOR REFUSING ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>		
4.1	<b>Introduction</b>	145
	<i>Legislative history</i>	146
	<i>Law Commission review</i>	147
	<i>Grouping of withholding grounds</i>	147
4.2	<b>SECTION 27 - Security, defence, international relations etc.</b>	148
	<i>Marginal note</i>	149
	<i>27(1)(a): Security, defence, international relations</i>	149
	<i>27(1)(b): Inter-governmental entrusting of information</i>	149
	<i>27(1)(c): Maintenance of the law</i>	150
	<i>Informant identity</i>	150
	<i>Investigation and detection of offences</i>	150
	<i>TAIC</i>	151
	<i>Canadian law enforcement provisions</i>	151
	<i>27(1)(d): Endangering the safety of an individual</i>	152
4.3	<b>SECTION 28 - Trade secrets</b>	153
	<i>28(1)(a): Trade secrets</i>	154
	<i>28(1)(b): Prejudice commercial position</i>	155
4.4	<b>SECTION 29 - Other reasons for refusal of requests</b>	156
	<i>29(1)(a): Unwarranted disclosure of the affairs of another</i>	157
	<i>29(1)(b): Evaluative material</i>	158
	<i>Meaning of "supply"</i>	159
	<i>Response to include grounds</i>	160
	<i>Evaluative material held by author</i>	160
	<i>29(1)(c): Physical or mental health</i>	161
	<i>Use of provision</i>	161
	<i>Psychologists</i>	161
	<i>29(1)(d): Young persons</i>	162
	<i>29(1)(e): Safe custody or rehabilitation</i>	163
	<i>29(1)(f): Legal professional privilege</i>	164
	<i>29(1)(g): Radio NZ Ltd/TVNZ Ltd</i>	165
	<i>Restructuring of RNZ</i>	165
	<i>Protection of sources</i>	165
	<i>Access, correction and the news media</i>	166
	<i>29(1)(h): Library, museum or archive</i>	167
	<i>29(1)(i): Contempt of court or Parliament</i>	167

	<i>29(1)(j): Frivolous, vexatious or trivial</i>	167
	<i>29(2): Unavailability of information</i>	168
	<i>29(2)(a): Not readily retrievable</i>	168
	<i>29(2)(b): Information requested does not exist or cannot be found</i>	169
	<i>29(2)(c): Requested information is not held</i>	170
	<i>29(3): Evaluative material</i>	170
4.5	<b>SECTION 30 - Refusal not permitted for any other reason</b>	171
	<i>Counselling and medical privileges</i>	171
4.6	<b>SECTION 31 - Restriction when person sentenced to imprisonment</b>	172
4.7	<b>SECTION 32 - Information concerning existence of certain information</b>	173
	<i>Broadening the application of section 32</i>	173
 <b>PART V: PROCEDURAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO ACCESS TO AND CORRECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>		
5.1	<b>Introduction</b>	176
5.2	<b>SECTION 33 - Application</b>	177
5.3	<b>SECTION 34 - Who may make requests</b>	177
	<i>Importance of access and correction rights</i>	177
	<i>International considerations</i>	178
	<i>Legislative history</i>	179
	<i>Practicalities concerning overseas requests</i>	180
	<i>Adoption (Intercountry) Act 1997</i>	181
	<i>Parents and children etc</i>	181
5.4	<b>SECTION 35 - Charges</b>	184
	<i>Charging for correction</i>	184
	<i>Misuse of access right</i>	186
	<i>Charging guidelines</i>	188
5.5	<b>SECTION 36 - Commissioner may authorise public sector agency to charge</b>	189
5.6	<b>SECTION 37 - Urgency</b>	189
	<i>Urgent cases on review</i>	191
5.7	<b>SECTION 38 - Assistance</b>	191
	<i>Assistance and charging</i>	192
	<i>Assistance and urgency</i>	192
5.8	<b>SECTION 39 - Transfer of requests</b>	192
	<i>Where individual does not want transfer</i>	192
5.9	<b>SECTION 40 - Decisions on requests</b>	193
	<i>What is the "time limit"?</i>	193
	<i>Subsections (3) and (4)</i>	194
5.10	<b>SECTION 41 - Extension of time limits</b>	195
	<i>Multiple extensions</i>	196
	<i>Grounds for extension</i>	196
	<i>Outer time limit</i>	197
	<i>"As soon as reasonably practicable"</i>	197
5.11	<b>SECTION 42 - Documents</b>	197
	<i>Origin and operation of provision</i>	197
	<i>Loans of documents</i>	198
5.12	<b>SECTION 43 - Deletion of information from documents</b>	199
5.13	<b>SECTION 44 - Reason for refusal to be given</b>	200
5.14	<b>SECTION 45 - Precautions</b>	200

**PART VI: CODES OF PRACTICE AND EXEMPTIONS FROM INFORMATION PRIVACY PRINCIPLES**

6.1	<b>Introduction</b>	203
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	<i>Codes and exemptions</i>	203
	<i>Legislative history</i>	204
	<i>Why codes of practice</i>	205
	<i>Role and placement of exemptions and exceptions</i>	205
6.2	<b>SECTION 46 - Codes of practice</b>	207
	<i>Section 46(2)(aa)</i>	208
	<i>Section 46(4)</i>	209
	<i>Section 46(6) and (7)</i>	210
6.3	<b>SECTION 47 - Proposal for issuing code of practice</b>	211
	<i>Representative body applications</i>	211
	<i>Costs of section 47(2) applications</i>	213
	<i>Section 47(5)</i>	213
6.4	<b>SECTION 48 - Notification of intention to issue code</b>	214
6.5	<b>SECTION 49 - Notification, availability and commencement of code</b>	215
6.6	<b>SECTION 50 - Codes deemed to be regulations for purposes of disallowance</b>	216
6.7	<b>SECTION 51 - Amendment and revocation of codes</b>	217
6.8	<b>SECTION 52 - Urgent issue of code</b>	217
6.9	<b>SECTION 53 - Effect of code</b>	218
6.10	<b>SECTION 54 - Commissioner may authorise collection, use, or disclosure of personal information</b>	218
	<i>Section 54</i>	219
	<i>Extension to principle 9</i>	219
	<i>Public notification costs</i>	220
6.11	<b>SECTION 55 - Certain personal information excluded</b>	220
	<i>Royal Commissions and commissions of inquiry</i>	221
6.12	<b>SECTION 56 - Personal information relating to domestic affairs</b>	222
6.13	<b>SECTION 57 - Intelligence organisations</b>	224
	<i>Introduction</i>	224
	<i>Existing position of intelligence organisations</i>	224
	<i>Extension of other principles to intelligence organisations</i>	225
	<i>Principle 1</i>	226
	<i>Principle 5</i>	226
	<i>Principle 8</i>	227
	<i>Principle 9</i>	227
	<i>Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security</i>	229
	<b>PART VII: PUBLIC REGISTER PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>	
7.1	<b>Introduction</b>	231
	<i>Overview</i>	231
	<i>Terminology</i>	232
	<i>Council of Europe Recommendation R(91)10</i>	232
	<i>Public register issues and risks</i>	233
	<i>Consultation</i>	234
7.2	<b>SECTION 58 - Interpretation</b>	235
	<i>Location of definitions</i>	235
	<i>Definition of "public register"</i>	235
	<i>Possible new definitions</i>	237
7.3	<b>SECTION 59 - Public register privacy principles</b>	237
7.4	<b>Principle 1 - Search references</b>	237
	<i>Search references and purpose of a register</i>	238
	<i>Establishing purpose of a register</i>	239
7.5	<b>Principle 2 - Use of information from register</b>	241
	<i>Council of Europe Recommendation R(91)10</i>	242
	<i>Application to every person</i>	242



	<i>Layout</i>	242
7.6	<b>Principle 3 - Electronic transmission of personal information from public register</b>	243
	<i>Manual to computerised registers</i>	243
	<i>Privacy risks of electronic transmission</i>	243
7.7	<b>Principle 4 - Charging for access to public register</b>	246
	<i>Third party charging</i>	246
7.8	<b>Proposed new principle - bulk disclosures</b>	248
	<i>Obtaining bulk information from a register</i>	248
	<i>Publication of a register in its entirety</i>	250
7.9	<b>SECTION 60 - Application of information privacy principles and public register privacy principles to public registers</b>	251
	<i>Application and savings provisions - sections 7, 8 and 60</i>	251
	<i>"Reasonably practicable" in section 60(2)</i>	253
7.10	<b>SECTION 61 - Complaints relating to compliance with principles</b>	253
7.11	<b>SECTION 62 - Enforceability of principles</b>	254
7.12	<b>SECTION 63 - Codes of practice in relation to public registers</b>	254
7.13	<b>SECTION 64 - Effect of code</b>	256
7.14	<b>SECTION 65 - Power to amend Second Schedule by Order in Council</b>	257
	<i>Use of Orders in Council to bring statutory registers into scheme</i>	257
	<i>Domestic Violence Act regulations</i>	258
7.15	<b>Statutory mechanisms for suppression of details on registers</b>	259
	<i>Suppression mechanisms in existing statutes</i>	259
	<i>Harassment</i>	260
	<i>Discussion paper</i>	261
	<i>Proposed new public register privacy principle</i>	262
	<i>Mechanism for obtaining suppression directions</i>	264
7.16	<b>Interaction with Official Information Act and Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act</b>	265
 <b>PART VIII: COMPLAINTS</b>		
8.1	<b>Introduction</b>	267
	<i>New Zealand complaints model</i>	268
	<i>Role of the courts</i>	268
	<i>Complaints or reviews?</i>	269
8.2	<b>SECTION 66 - Interference with privacy</b>	270
	<i>Clarification of interaction between subsections (1) and (2)</i>	270
8.3	<b>SECTION 67 - Complaints</b>	271
8.4	<b>SECTION 68 - Mode of complaint</b>	272
8.5	<b>SECTION 69 - Investigation of interference with privacy of individual</b>	272
8.6	<b>SECTION 70 - Action on receipt of complaint</b>	273
	<i>Notification</i>	273
	<i>Deferral</i>	273
	<i>Preliminary inquiries</i>	273
	<i>Complaints beyond jurisdiction</i>	275
8.7	<b>SECTION 71 - Commissioner may decide to take no action on complaint</b>	275
	<i>Deferral of complaints</i>	276
	<i>Grounds for deferral</i>	277
	<i>Limitation period</i>	279
8.8	<b>SECTION 72 - Referral of complaint to Ombudsman</b>	279
8.9	<b>SECTION 72A - Referral of complaint to Health and Disability Commissioner</b>	279
8.10	<b>SECTION 72B - Referral of complaint to Inspector-General of Security and Intelligence</b>	280



8.11	SECTION 73 - Proceedings of Commissioner	280
8.12	SECTION 74 - Settlement of complaints	280
8.13	SECTION 75 - Parties to be informed of result of investigation	281
8.14	SECTION 76 - Compulsory conferences	282
8.15	SECTION 77 - Procedure after investigation	282
8.16	SECTION 78 - Procedure in relation to charging	282
8.17	SECTION 79 - Breaches of certain principles occurring before 1 July 1996	283
8.18	SECTION 80 - Commissioner to report breach of duty or misconduct	284
8.19	SECTION 81 - Special procedure relating to intelligence organisations	284
8.20	SECTION 82 - Proceedings before Complaints Review Tribunal	285
	<i>"Specialist" tribunal</i>	285
	<i>Section 82</i>	286
	<i>Enforcement of assurances</i>	287
8.21	SECTION 83 - Aggrieved individual may bring proceedings before Complaints Review Tribunal	288
8.22	SECTION 84 - Remedies that may be sought	289
8.23	SECTION 85 - Powers of Complaints Review Tribunal	289
8.24	SECTION 86 - Right of Proceedings Commissioner to appear in proceedings	289
8.25	SECTION 87 - Proof of exceptions	289
8.26	SECTION 88 - Damages	290
8.27	SECTION 89 - Certain provisions of Human Rights Act 1993 to apply	290

#### PART IX: PROCEEDINGS OF COMMISSIONER

9.1	Introduction	291
9.2	SECTION 90 - Procedure	292
9.3	SECTION 91 - Evidence	292
9.4	SECTION 92 - Compliance with requirements of Commissioner	293
	<i>Sanction for breach of time limits</i>	294
9.5	SECTION 93 - Extension of time limit	295
	<i>No provision for multiple extensions</i>	295
9.6	SECTION 94 - Protection and privileges of witnesses etc	295
	<i>1997 amendments - subsections (1A) and (1B)</i>	295
	SECTION 95 - Disclosures of information etc	297
	SECTION 96 - Proceedings privileged	298

#### PART X: INFORMATION MATCHING

10.1	Introduction	300
	<i>What is information matching?</i>	300
	<i>Pros and cons of data matching</i>	301
	<i>Controls on data matching</i>	303
	<i>Information matching not prohibited</i>	303
	<i>Legitimising data matching</i>	305
10.2	SECTION 97 - Interpretation	306
	<i>Further definitions</i>	306
	<i>Adverse action</i>	306
	<i>Authorised information matching information</i>	307
	<i>Authorised information matching programme</i>	307
	<i>Discrepancy</i>	308
	<i>Information matching programme</i>	308

	<i>Information matching provision</i>	309
	<i>Information matching rules</i>	310
	<i>Monetary payment</i>	310
	<i>Specified Agency</i>	310
10.3	<b>SECTION 98 - Information matching guidelines</b>	312
	<i>Paragraph (c)</i>	313
	<i>Paragraph (e)</i>	313
	<i>Paragraph (f)</i>	315
10.4	<b>SECTION 99 - Information matching agreements</b>	316
	<i>Upside</i>	316
	<i>Downside</i>	316
10.5	<b>SECTION 100 - Use of results of information matching programme</b>	317
10.6	<b>SECTION 101 - Further provisions relating to results of information matching programme</b>	318
	<i>Inland Revenue Department</i>	318
10.7	<b>SECTION 102 - Extension of time limit</b>	319
	<i>Which time limit?</i>	319
10.8	<b>SECTION 103 - Notice of adverse action proposed</b>	320
	<i>Subsection (1A) - the Customs Match</i>	320
10.9	<b>SECTION 104 - Reporting requirements</b>	323
	<i>Australian equivalents</i>	323
10.10	<b>SECTION 105 - Information matching programmes to be reported on in annual report</b>	324
	<i>Costs of monitoring and assessment</i>	325
10.11	<b>SECTION 106 - Review of statutory authorities for information matching</b>	327
10.12	<b>SECTION 107 - Amendment of information matching rules</b>	327
	<i>Rule 1 - Notice to individual affected</i>	328
	<i>Rule 2 - Use of unique identifiers</i>	329
	<i>Rule 3 - On-line transfers</i>	330
	<i>Rule 4 - Technical standards</i>	331
	<i>Rule 5 - Safeguards for individuals affected by results of programmes</i>	331
	<i>Rule 6 - Destruction of information</i>	332
	<i>Rule 7 - No new databank</i>	332
	<i>Rule 8 - Time limits</i>	333
	<i>Defining terms</i>	334
10.13	<b>SECTION 108 - Avoidance of controls on information matching through use of exceptions</b>	334
10.14	<b>SECTION 109 - Avoidance of controls on information matching through use of official information statutes</b>	335
 <b>PART XI: LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION</b>		
11.1	<b>Introduction</b>	337
	<i>Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976</i>	338
	<i>On-line access</i>	340
11.2	<b>SECTION 110 - Interpretation</b>	342
	<i>Accessing and holder agencies</i>	342
	<i>Law enforcement information</i>	342
	<i>Local authority</i>	342
11.3	<b>SECTION 111 - Access by accessing agencies to law enforcement information</b>	343
11.4	<b>SECTION 112 - Local authorities may be authorised to have access to law enforcement information</b>	344
	<i>Current local authority access</i>	344
	<i>Need for local authority access</i>	345
	<i>Amendments if local authority access retained</i>	345
11.5	<b>SECTION 113 - Amendment to Fifth Schedule</b>	346



# Part XI

## Law Enforcement Information

# XI

**337**

“Hailed as a beacon at the time of its enactment in 1976, the Wanganui Computer legislation was simply not geared to cope with the broader spectrum of privacy issues that arose during the years that followed. Those issues went far beyond the scope of such a limited statute as the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976 and had already drawn a response from the New Zealand Government when it signed the ‘guidelines agreement’ in Rome as far back as 1980. The new Privacy Act is an endorsement of that response.”

- P L Molineaux, *Final Report of the Wanganui Computer Centre Privacy Commissioner*, 1993

“Part XI of the Act and the Fifth Schedule should be retained. They represent a balance between the spirit and intention of the Privacy Act and the needs of an efficient criminal justice system by allowing on-line access to information where it would not be practicable to process individual requests for information because of the volume of cases involved. The Fifth Schedule also has the potential to act as an aid to transparency and accountability in terms of the information handling practices of justice sector agencies.”

- Ministry of Justice, submission H14

“The Group favours a principled and flexible approach as opposed to a prescriptive approach. Part XI of the Act and the Fifth Schedule should be repealed.”

- NZ Law Society Privacy Working Group, submission H15

“The Ministry does not consider the repeal of Part XI and the Fifth Schedule to be practical. It is impossible to assess whether each on-line collection or disclosure of information fits within one of the exceptions to the information privacy principles. It is only practically possible to assess types or classes of information.”

- Ministry of Transport, submission S58

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

11.1.1 Part XI makes special provision for certain law enforcement information. It incorporates, in a modified form, the Schedule to the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976 which was repealed by the Privacy Act.

11.1.2 The purpose of Part XI was described in the explanatory note to the Privacy of Information Bill as follows:

“The purpose of Part XI is to authorise access by certain



Government departments and local authorities to law enforcement information stored by other Government departments on the Wanganui computer. In the absence of this authority, access that is available now might not be permitted under the Bill because it would not otherwise be permitted by the information privacy principles. It was considered preferable to continue in a modified form the provisions of the schedule to the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976 rather than provide wide exceptions to the information privacy principles in order to preserve such access."

11.1.3 Although Part XI, and its associated schedule, were carried forward into the Privacy Act 1993 as enacted, the Select Committee did make certain changes. As outlined below, one of those changes - concerning the method of amendment to the schedule - has been brought forward as a significant issue in the review.

11.1.4 In reviewing Part XI and the Fifth Schedule, it has been necessary to consider, amongst other things:

- whether the purpose of Part XI, as described above, was indeed an appropriate approach to the issue of law enforcement information sharing;
- whether the process for amending the Fifth Schedule, introduced by the Select Committee, should continue;
- what method of amendment to the Fifth Schedule should be adopted if change is to be made;
- how well Part XI and the Fifth Schedule have met the challenges of justice sector reorganisation, technological change and, in particular, the migration of law enforcement agencies off the Wanganui computer.

11.1.5 Thirty one submissions were received on the discussion paper from a wide range of respondents, including local and central government and business amongst others.

11.1.6 Before turning to the detail of Part XI it will be helpful to canvass two matters to gain a full appreciation of the issues. First, I will say something about the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976 which was New Zealand's first information privacy law. Then I will comment upon the nature of on-line access to personal information which is authorised by this part.

*Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976*

11.1.7 This is not the place to offer a definitive history of, or guide to, the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976. Instead, some background information is provided here to set the discussion of Part XI in context. Perhaps at some stage the definitive history of privacy and freedom of information law in New Zealand will evaluate the importance of the 1976 law - whether it was a significant precursor to the Privacy Act and Official Information Act or simply a minor sideshow in the early years of major computerisation which distracted attention from the lack of privacy or open government legislation.<sup>1</sup>

11.1.8 In 1971 an amendment to the Transport Act 1962 established a central register of all driver licences as a precursor to a central computer system. In 1972 the Government announced that it was to investigate a specially designed electronic data processing system for law enforcement agencies. Privacy concerns were already in consideration and it was stated that the proposed system:

"Would not be designed as a reference file on every New

<sup>1</sup> I am unaware of any published review of the Wanganui Computer Centre Act's 15 year operation. Some information is to be found in the annual reports of the Wanganui Privacy Commissioner from 1977 through to 1993 and, concerning the Act's first 6 years, in T J McBride, *Privacy Review*, 1984.

When the Wanganui Computer Centre Act 1976 was introduced it provided for the first time an opportunity for the general public to examine information stored about them by a government agency and have it amended or corrected where necessary. In achieving this, the Act made a contribution in the field of human rights jurisprudence that has been justifiably claimed as being not only innovative but also unique. It broke new ground. It is of interest to note that when the OECD Guidelines were adopted several years later the principle of individual participation was included as being basic to any scheme for the legislative protection of privacy."

- PL MOLINÉAUX, REPORT  
OF THE WANGANUI COMPUTER  
CENTRE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER,  
1985

1992  
Cin  
Notes  
Privacy  
already



# Privacy Commissioner's Review of the Privacy Act

## Reports

Section 26 of the Privacy Act required the Privacy Commissioner to review the operation of the Act as soon practicable after it had been in force for three years. This review was completed in November 1998 and resulted in a 420 page report *Necessary and Desirable: Privacy Act 1993 Review* (generally referred to as *Necessary and Desirable*). This contained 154 recommendations for amendment or further study.

Section 26 also requires further periodic reviews. The Commissioner has submitted several short supplementary reports noting developments that might affect the recommendations. These reports included a number of supplementary recommendations.

*Necessary and Desirable* made some recommendations in relation to information matching but anticipated that a further specialised review of the information matching rules would be needed. The Commissioner undertook a supplementary review and submitted a further report in June 2001.

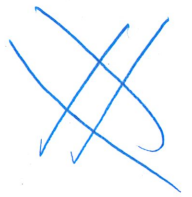
It is expected that some of the Commissioner's recommendations will be addressed in an amendment bill that may be introduced to Parliament during 2008.

To download documents please click the following links:

- [\*\*\*Necessary and Desirable\*\*\*](#) – highlights document (PDF file 42 pages 3.61MB)

- [\*\*\*Necessary and Desirable\*\*\*](#) – the 1998 report (Warning: large document, PDF file 434 pages, 2.44MB)

- [\*\*\*Necessary and Desirable\*\*\*](#) – the 1998 report in separate chapters ([\*\*Content\*\*](#), [\*\*Preface\*\*](#), [\*\*Introduction\*\*](#), [\*\*Background\*\*](#), [\*\*Part I\*\*](#), [\*\*Part II\*\*](#), [\*\*Part III\*\*](#), [\*\*Part IV\*\*](#), [\*\*Part V\*\*](#), [\*\*Part VI\*\*](#), [\*\*Part VII\*\*](#), [\*\*Part VIII\*\*](#), [\*\*Part IX\*\*](#), [\*\*Part X\*\*](#), [\*\*Part XI\*\*](#), [\*\*Part XII\*\*](#), [\*\*Schedules\*\*](#), [\*\*Summary of\*\*](#)



Recommendations, Appd A, Appd B, Appd C, Appd D, Appd E, Appd F, Appd G, Appd H, Appd I, Appd J)

- The Commissioner's supplementary reports from April 2000, January 2003, December 2003 and May 2008 (Media release report)
- Consolidated list of Recommendations from the 1998 and supplementary reports
- 2001 and 2003 report recommending amendments to the information matching rules

Printed copies of *Necessary and Desirable* can be purchased from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner ([enquiries@privacy.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@privacy.org.nz)) for \$40.00, for as long as stocks last.

### **Other material on the 1998 review**

The 1998 review involved a series of stages of research, consultation and analysis. In the public phase of the review, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner released 12 discussion papers:

- DP1 Structure and Scope
- DP 2 Information Privacy Principles
- DP 3 Access and Correction
- DP 4 Codes of Practice and Exemptions
- DP 5 Public Register Privacy Issues
- DP 6 Complaints and Investigation
- DP 7 Information Matching
- DP 8 Law Enforcement Information
- DP 9 Compliance and Administration Costs

· **DP 10 Interaction with other Laws**

· **DP 11 Intelligence Organisations**

· **DP 12 New Privacy Protections**

Four volumes of submissions; volume 1 (**DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5**), volume 2 (**DP6, DP7, DP8, DP9, DP10, DP11, DP 12**), volume 3 (**Part 1, Part 2, Part 3**) and volume 4 (**Part 1, Part 2**) were received. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner compiled complete sets of all the submissions and some specialist compilations in particular areas (such as **complaints, compliance costs, public registers** and **intelligence organisations**).

Photocopies of these compilations are available for purchase for \$12.50 from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner ([enquiries@privacy.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@privacy.org.nz)).

### **Journal articles**

In December 1998 the journal Privacy Law & Policy Reporter devoted a special issue to the Privacy Commissioner's report:

· **The review process — taking on the critics -- [1998] PLPR 75; (1998) 5 PLPR 101**

McBride, Tim

· **Editorial -- [1998] PLPR 76; (1998) 5 PLPR 102**

Waters, Nigel

· **Themes in the report -- [1998] PLPR 77; (1998) 5 PLPR 104**

Slane, Bruce

· **Threshold issues and the principles of the Act -- [1998] PLPR 78; (1998) 5 PLPR 110**

Evans, Katrine

· **News media and the Privacy Act -- [1998] PLPR 79; (1998) 5 PLPR 113**

McBride, Tim

· Privacy Act Review: access and complaints -- [1998] PLPR 80; (1998) 5 PLPR 115

Roth, Paul

· Coerced release of criminal history information — urgent change required -- [1998] PLPR 81; (1998) 5 PLPR 119

McBride, Tim

· The Review's treatment of the Information Privacy Principles - [1998] PLPR 82; (1998) 5 PLPR 120

Stevens, Bob

· A local authority perspective -- [1998] PLPR 83; (1998) 5 PLPR 122

Murphy, Geraldine

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