

# UN privacy expert slams government stance on privacy and 'big data'

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Justice Minister Amy Adams says "the ramifications of the digital age" are an important consideration for the Government as it moves ahead with privacy law reforms.

The United Nations' privacy chief has criticised the Government's plans to make more use of "big data", saying it should not sacrifice New Zealanders' privacy for security reasons.

Professor Joseph Cannataci, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to privacy, also said the Government's privacy laws and regulations were "inadequate in 2016".

Cannataci's comments came after a speech to the Privacy Week Forum on Wednesday morning from Justice Minister Amy Adams.

In the speech, Adams said that while privacy was a right, "that right does need to be balanced" against other issues like the right to be safe from harm.

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- \* [NZ 'falling behind' world on privacy - Privacy Commissioner](#)
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"It's important we find the right balance between shoring up privacy protection and the need to share personal information to better target services, more efficiently spend taxpayers' money, or to better protect our citizens.

"I believe we can all agree that sharing personal information in appropriate ways can improve and, even, save the lives of some of our most vulnerable New Zealanders."

Adams said convicted murder Phillip John Smith's escape to Brazil in 2014 was "in part" made possible by government agencies failing to share information due to privacy fears.

Speaking afterwards, Cannataci told the audience he was "slightly disappointed" with the lack of evidence in Adams' speech linking big data to improved outcomes.

"I'm looking forward to the evidence which would be put forward by the New Zealand government as to why all this weird and wonderful technology is really going to benefit New Zealand citizens.

"That is, I suspect, what you want to know that your tax dollars are being used for - not a vague promise that you're going to be able to save lives simply by using something called 'big data'."

## 'I WANT IT ALL'

Cannataci said it was wrong to suggest, as Adams did, that the Government needed to strike a balance between privacy and security.

"As the song goes, and I come from the age of Queen, I want it all - I want to have both privacy and security.

"They are not, and I repeat not, a trade-off...and this is where we have to insist that our politicians get it right, because if they get it wrong, we are the ones who pay, as always."

While he supported New Zealand's privacy principles, "the mechanisms that are available to the [Privacy] Commissioner and other agencies are inadequate in 2016".

Adams said she met with Cannataci after his speech, and it appeared his criticisms were "a bit of a misunderstanding" about her comments.

## REFORMS 'TRACKING ALONG WELL'

She "absolutely agreed" that both privacy and security should be kept, but the Government had to weigh the benefits of sharing information against the potential harm it could cause when making exemptions in privacy laws.

Adams said she had also explained the Government's "social investment" approach, using data from government agencies to identify and help at-risk groups.

She said the Government's privacy law reforms were "tracking along well", with draft legislation likely to be released by the end of the year, and did not believe she was downplaying its importance.

"Privacy is not something you can set in a 1990s context and leave - we have to continue to understand the ramifications of the digital age and

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