



## Politicians should lose privacy immunity

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### For Immediate Release

Independent Senate Candidate for the ACT, Anthony Pesec, has called for the Privacy Act to be applied to politicians and political parties.

“It is indefensible that the Privacy Act does not apply to information about Australian citizens collected by politicians and political parties”, Mr Pesec said.

“Many parties are utilising sophisticated databases and voter-targeting systems that store a great deal of highly-sensitive information about individuals.

“It’s not a matter of if, but when, one of these systems will be breached.”

Removing the Privacy Act exemption will require politicians and parties to notify both the Privacy Commissioner and affected individuals if their systems are breached and will also require them to develop proper information security and privacy procedures.

“We’re seeing both state and non-state actors actively attempting to influence elections worldwide through digital channels. Any breach of a party’s systems will therefore potentially undermine our democratic process.

“I expect the major parties to resist this change, which is why voting Independent at this election is crucial to restoring faith in our democracy.”

Mr Pesec also called for proper resourcing of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC).

“Under the current government, the OAIC has been starved of funding, greatly reducing its ability to investigate privacy breaches and to oversee Freedom of Information issues.

“For the last four years, the three Commissioner posts within the OAIC - Information, Privacy and Freedom of Information – have been assigned to a single individual.

“If elected, I will work to ensure that the OAIC is properly-funded and that all three Commissioner posts are filled by separate, full-time Commissioners.

“I will also push for a comprehensive review of the Privacy Act, with the goal of achieving a ruling of adequacy from the European Commission.

“The European Commission currently considers Australia’s Privacy Act to provide inadequate protection to allow the free flow of data between Australia and the European Union. The privacy laws of New Zealand, South Korea and Japan are all considered adequate by the European Commission. This is a massive competitive disadvantage for Australian digitally-focused businesses.”

**Media contact:** Jon Lawrence 0414 669 787 [jon@anthonypesec.com.au](mailto:jon@anthonypesec.com.au)

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