

NEWS RELEASE



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Internet leak poses dilemma for privacy officials

AN analysis by a Deakin academic of the British National Party's (an extreme right wing party) entire membership list which was published on the Internet, has revealed the personal details of 15 Australians and raised a dilemma for privacy officials.

Professor Matthew Warren, Computer Ethics Expert and Head of School of Information Systems, Deakin University urged people to be cautious with their personal information, especially that which was likely to find its way into the public domain and the internet.

"Trying to remove information from the internet is generally unsuccessful," he said. "Attempts in the United Kingdom by the BNP to remove the membership list from offending web-sites have failed.

"One of the reasons is that the data is mirrored around the Internet on several sites and in several different countries with their own legal systems."

Professor Warren said the situation posed an intriguing ethical dilemma for Australia's Federal and State Privacy Commissioners.

"If the named BNP Australians requested assistance from the Federal or State Privacy Commissioners, would assistance be given to help remove their data from the Internet or would the fact they are linked to the BNP be an issue?" he said.

"The fact that the majority of the Australian members included their email addresses, would seem to indicate that the Internet is being used as means of contact and dissemination."

Professor Warren said the Internet contained so much positive information but unfortunately contains so much negative information including information relating to terrorism, hacking, pornography, racially hateful information, internet-based fraud.

"The Australia Federal Government's Internet filtering initiative should be extended to filter out racially hateful information and perhaps if such a system was place then racial extremism could be reduced."

British National Party leader Nick Griffin is planning to visit Australia, but his visa application is being opposed.

Professor Warren is available for interview. Phone 03 92446567, mobile 0408 301 540