

HEADS OECD COMMITTEE ON DATA SECURITY

PRESS RELEASE FOR SCITECH

KIRBY HEADS OECD COMMITTEE ON DATA SECURITY

Justice Michael Kirby has been elected to chair a new OECD expert committee on security of information systems. The committee had its first meeting at OECD Headquarters in Paris in January 1991. It is scheduled to have a further meeting on 4-5 March 1991. The cracking pace of the meetings reflects the urgency felt in a number of quarters about the need for agreed international guidelines on laws and practices to protect data security.

Between 1978 and 1980, Justice Kirby chaired an earlier OECD expert group on Transborder Data Barriers and the Protection of Privacy. That group produced guidelines which in 1980 were adopted by the Council of the OECD and recommended to member countries. Australia was one of the last countries to signify agreement to the guidelines but eventually all 24 OECD countries signed them. The Privacy Act 1989 passed by Federal Parliament annexes privacy principles which are relatively minor modifications, based upon the OECD guidelines.

According to Justice Kirby, the object of the new committee on data security is to produce a similar set of guidelines on data protection. By securing agreement about the basic principles to be observed in laws and policies on data protection, it is hoped that the inefficiencies and diseconomies of separate treatment of the subject in different legal regimes will be avoided. Having regard to the international character of information technology the need to lay down common principles which can guide domestic law-making and policy is acute.

A feature of the new expert group is the participation in it, as observers, of representatives of a number of multi-national private sector organisations having an interest in data security. It is understood that the committee has before it draft guidelines prepared by the OECD secretariat dealing with such issues as -

- * assurance of the confidentiality of confidential data;
- * assurance of accessibility to data for those entitled to have such access; and
- * protection of the integrity of data once accessed.

Justice Kirby told Scitech that Australian organisations and individuals having a particular interest in data security should contact him for the purpose of providing comments and suggestions for the content of basic rules on data security. Justice Kirby may be contacted on (02) 230 8203, Fax (02) 235 1006.
