
QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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8 February 2017

Council may commit offence by recording sound

Michael Cope, the President of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, today condemned the decision of the Morton Bay Regional Council to introduce CCTV cameras that record sounds as unjustified gross invasion of privacy.

“The Council should have, at least, consulted with the Privacy Commissioner first. Throughout the history of the introduction of CCTV in this state local councils have repeatedly failed to consult with the Privacy Commissioner before doing so. Clearly, local governments do not appreciate the importance of privacy.”

“But more importantly,” said Mr Cope, “the Council seems to have ignored the *Invasion of Privacy Act* which makes it an offence for one person to record a conversation to which they are not a party. This means that in at least some circumstances, the Council will be breaching the law.”

“CCTV is a cheap way for politicians to be seen to be doing something to reduce crime. But it creates a false sense of security for the public.”

‘Whilst we accept there is evidence that CCTV helps in the prosecution of crime, in the Council’s view there is no evidence to support the proposition that the use of CCTV deters crime.’¹”

Mr Cope said, “Recording sound takes the invasion of privacy to a new high by allowing the recording and storage of people’s conversations. We do not know how sensitive these microphones will be. However, modern technology has the capacity to faithfully record conversations at a great distance. Many sensitive conversations are held standing on the street.”

The limited benefits that may be gained from this technology do not justify the gross invasion of privacy that is being proposed.

Mr Cope said, “If this is to proceed then the sound recordings should be kept for no more than say 48 hours, unless they are tagged as needed in relation to a particular incident and signs should be erected warning people that if they in a certain area their conversations may be recorded.”

For further information contact Michael Cope President QCCL on 07 3223 5939 during office hours and on 0432 847 154

¹ Report of the UK Home Office, February 2005 and a report to the Home Office reported by *The Guardian* on 18 May 2009. And the 2010 the Victorian Law Reform Commission report on Surveillance

