



OFFICE OF THE BIOMETRICS
AND SURVEILLANCE
CAMERA COMMISSIONER

Senator James Paterson and Senator Jenny McAlister
Australian Senate
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600
By e-mail

11 March 2022

Re: Meeting at Australia House 10 March 2022

Dear Senators

Thank you for inviting me to discuss the arrangements for the regulation and oversight of biometric surveillance with you and your team yesterday. As I indicated in our discussion, I believe very firmly that strong democratic accountability is critical to the necessary balancing of technological capability, legal permissibility and societal acceptability of biometric surveillance.

Prominent among the many challenges which such accountability brings is the extent to which we temper our natural enthusiasm for the new and superficially attractive with some clear-eyed focus on the ethical and security risks. As to the ethical considerations, there are some glaring examples which I believe we ought to be addressed now rather than in righteous retrospection at some later date. In respect of the security risks, there is a lot more to be done to identify the level of exposure accompanying the speed and scale of technological evolution currently being experienced in this sector. The need for vigilance in respect of both - ethics and security - has perhaps never been greater and there is a sad irony in any surveillance strategy that would have the effect of handing others ever greater visibility of our own lives while we are not looking.

I hope that you found the discussion helpful and if there's anything I or my team can do to assist you in the future, please do not hesitate to ask.

Yours sincerely

Professor Fraser Sampson
Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner