



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Professor Annamarie Jagose
Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor

28 March 2024

Hon. Mark Dreyfus KC MP
Attorney-General
Robert Garran Offices
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

By email: Doxxing@ag.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General

Re: Public consultation on doxxing and privacy reforms

The University of Sydney supports the Australian Government's proposed reforms to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) to address doxxing, as outlined in the Attorney-General's Department [public consultation on doxxing and privacy reforms](#) released 11 March 2024.

Doxxing, alongside other forms of cyber abuse and bullying, continues to be a very challenging safety and wellbeing risk to our University community – including students, staff, affiliates, graduates, visitors and collaborators from Australia and overseas.

The practice of doxxing can have significant negative consequences for people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, and at its worst can become a personal security and physical safety threat. The risk of malicious online exposure of private information without consent can also have a chilling effect on freedom of speech, academic freedom, open discourse, and the willingness of individuals to engage in important public discussions, research and teaching activities.

Our experience is that doxxing that affects members of our community often occurs on platforms external to the University, limiting our ability to eliminate or reduce these risks. Even after a doxxing event, there is often little that we can do to remove the harmful content. Consequently, our safety controls are largely focused on education and support.

Strengthening Australia's anti-doxxing laws would therefore represent a welcome step towards creating a safer online environment for all members of our community and the wider population. In particular, the introduction of a new statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy should provide a deterrent by providing individuals who are victims of doxxing with a clear legal pathway to seek redress and hold perpetrators accountable. Alongside the avenues for individuals, we would also encourage reform that enables regulators and/or police to act swiftly and effectively in response to serious doxxing events that create a significant immediate safety risk for an individual or group.



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The University recognises that, in drafting legislation on this issue, it will be important to consider the appropriate balance between protecting individual's privacy rights and enhancing the safety of our community safety, while also addressing circumstances in which the public or national interest may warrant the disclosure of certain information about individuals and groups. With freedom of speech and association comes responsibility, and the University recognises the challenges of ensuring the new laws do not negatively impact equally important protections against discriminatory or other unlawful conduct, nor procedural fairness principles in the assessment of complaints.

The University of Sydney is committed to fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity. Ensuring the social and emotional wellbeing of all our staff and students while promoting an environment where our community members feel confident to express a diversity of opinions is vital to upholding the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom that underpin the pursuit of truth through research and education of the highest quality. The Government's proposed doxxing reforms align with the University of Sydney's values of trust, accountability and excellence. Once enacted these proposed enhancements to Australia's privacy laws will provide members of our community with greater confidence that they can participate freely and safely in academic and public discourse. The changes will also help all Australian universities make their campuses and online platforms safer for all.

I encourage the Government to progress these reforms as a matter of priority.

Sincerely,

(signature removed)

Professor Annamarie Jagose
Acting Vice-Chancellor