



MEDIA RELEASE

83 organisations and experts from “Five Eyes” nations demand respect for strong encryption

Canberra, 29th June 2017

Today, 83 organisations and individuals from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have sent letters to their respective governments insisting that government officials defend strong encryption. The letter comes on the heels of a meeting of the “Five Eyes” ministerial meeting in Ottawa, Canada earlier this week.

The “Five Eyes” is a surveillance partnership of intelligence agencies consisting of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. According to a joint communique issued after the meeting encryption and access to data was discussed. The communique stated that “encryption can severely undermine public safety efforts by impeding lawful access to the content of communications during investigations into serious crimes, including terrorism.”

In the letter, 83 groups and individuals from the so-called “Five Eyes” countries wrote “we call on you to respect the right to use and develop strong encryption.” Signatories also urged the members of the ministerial meeting to commit to allowing public participating in any future discussions.

[Read the full letter here.](#)

Jon Lawrence, EFA Executive Officer said, “Calls to undermine encryption in the name of ‘national security’ are fundamentally misguided and dangerous. Encryption is a necessary and critical tool enabling individual privacy, a free media, online commerce and the operations of organisations of all types, including of course government agencies. Undermining encryption therefore represents a serious threat to national security in its own right, as well as threatening basic human rights and the enormous economic and social benefits that the digital revolution has brought for people across the globe.”

Jim Killock, Executive Director at the UK's Open Rights Group said, "Our political leaders are putting people around the world at greater risk of crime when they call for greater powers to weaken our digital security. Security experts and cryptographers are as united in their views on encryption as scientists are on climate change. Politicians need to listen to them before they make decisions that could put us all at risk."

Thomas Beagle, Chairperson of the NZ Council for Civil Liberties said, "We increasingly rely on a secure internet for work, personal relationships, commerce, and politics. While we



support justifiable lawful intercept with appropriate oversight, we don't think we should be seriously weakening the security of the internet to achieve it. Attempts to weaken encryption will do more damage to our society and our freedom than the possible threats it's meant to be protecting us from."

Amie Stepanovich, U.S. Policy Manager at Access Now said, "Massive surveillance operations conducted by the Five Eyes partnership inherently put the human rights of people around the world at risk. The joint communique commits to human rights and the rule of law, but provides no detail as to how these powerful, secretive spy agencies plan to live up to those commitments. We call for public participation and meaningful accountability now, otherwise this will remain nothing more than a meaningless commitment."

About EFA

Established in January 1994, Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA) is a national, membership-based non-profit organisation representing Internet users concerned with digital freedoms and rights.

EFA is independent of government and commerce, and is funded by membership subscriptions and donations from individuals and organisations with an altruistic interest in promoting civil liberties in the digital context. EFA members and supporters come from all parts of Australia and from diverse backgrounds.

EFA's major objectives are to protect and promote the civil liberties of users of digital communications systems (such as the Internet) and of those affected by their use and to educate the community at large about the social, political and civil liberties issues involved in the use of digital communications systems.

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