

Who is reading your email?

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ROCKHAMPTON's Housh Fallah doesn't believe in mixing work and pleasure, so when his boss screens his emails, he won't have anything to hide.



NOTHING TO HIDE: Rockhampton IT developer Housh Fallah has backed the government's call to allow employers to screen workers' emails. Picture by **KAREN SPELLMAN**. ks14/0408/14

His comments came after it was announced new laws that give companies the power to intercept employee emails and internet communications without consent are being considered by the federal government in the name of national security.

Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland said new counter-terrorism measures were being developed by the government, including changes to the Telecommunications Act that would allow companies providing services critical to the economy to snoop on their workers.

Mr Fallah said although employees' rights needed to be respected, the rights of the employer to run their business efficiently was paramount.

"It's not an invasion of privacy. Work email should be for work purposes, and an employer should have the right to see what work is being done," he said.

"If an employee wants privacy in their communication then they should use their own personal account in their own time."

"If they are so worried about their privacy then they should use their own account, on their own con-

nection, in their own time." Mr Fallah, an IT developer for Ultimate IT, said he rarely used his work email account for personal reasons, and would have no problems with his boss monitoring his account.

"It is still using company resources so I would have no issue with my employer screening it," he said.

"Like most organisations, we have an acceptable use agreement which we all sign as part of our employment."

"We are fortunate the company doesn't drive a hard line, but in return we don't abuse the system either, not just with e-mail

but general internet usage as well."

Federal Attorney-General McClelland told southern media an attack aimed at disabling major computer networks, such as the stock exchange or electricity grid, would "reap far greater economic damage" than a physical terrorist attack.

Currently, the act only allows security agencies to monitor their employees' internet communication.

"At least 90 per cent of networks exist outside government but there's no powers for corporate network supervisors to intercept such communications unless they have

specific authority from the employee," Mr McClelland said.

"There needs to be protocols and guidelines developed so companies can protect their own networks.

The proposal has been slammed by civil liberty groups, who say the new laws would be abused.

"These new powers will facilitate fishing expeditions into employees' emails and computer use rather than being used to protect critical infrastructure," said Dale Clapperton from Electronic Frontiers Australia.

The government hopes to have the new laws in place by the middle of next year.

Email : to snoop or not to snoop

ROCKHAMPTON solicitor Nicl Schmitt says she isn't surprised at the Australian Government's latest call for heightened security against a terrorist attack.

Ms Schmitt said it was important the government achieved the right balance between civil liberties of citizens and still avoid an attack.

"There's always a risk that innocent people are going to have their freedom violated," she said.

"Australia has already implemented quite strict anti-terrorism laws that border on infringing people's civil rights."

She said the government should endeavour to specify publicly what they

intend to intercept, and who they would be targeting, and seek public comment on the issue.

Central Queensland University multimedia lecturer Dr Grayson Cooke said the flood gates for more privacy issues had been open for some time, and the events of September 11 had only increased the panic of an attack.

"I don't think something like this is particularly different from what already occurs," he said.

"I think it is a harbinger of a future in which heightened surveillance and more sophisticated methods of monitoring digital communications is increasingly the norm."

Do you think your boss should be able to monitor your email?

Courtney Hey, of Brisbane: It think it's an invasion of privacy.



I don't agree with the idea, but I do agree people shouldn't be socialising in work hours.

ks14/0408/10

Kristina Bund, of Germany: I think it's best not to send personal emails at work.



But I don't think bosses should be able to read them.

ks14/0408/11

Henry Bert, of Townsville: I think they should bring in the new law. People get paid to be at work to do a job. I would sack an employee if they weren't doing their job.



ks14/0408/12

Jason Koch, of Rockhampton: I think they should keep social emails for at home. People should be working at work.



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