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FOUR CORNERS

VIDEO: In Google We Trust

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In Google We Trust - Monday 9 September 2013

Every hour of every day, our digital interactions are being recorded and logged. We live in the age of 'big data', where seemingly mundane information about how we go about our lives has enormous value.

Next on *Four Corners*, with the help of expert data trackers, we follow the information trail of an ordinary Australian family. We follow their data over a typical day, watching as it is surreptitiously recorded by government agencies and private organisations.

Who gathers the information, what are they doing with it and what are your legal rights?

The internet has brought us conveniences once unimaginable. You can shop online, diagnose illnesses, and send 'selfies' whenever you want. But it isn't all one way traffic. Every time you use a search engine like Google, or access an 'app' on your smartphone, your activity is logged by companies around the world - many you've never even heard of.

That sometimes intensely personal data is either used or sold to make money.

At one level this could be to your advantage. Marketing and advertising is ever more accurately tailored to your wants and needs.

"The sort of products you're buying can tell a marketer an awful lot about what else you're likely to buy, you know, what model of car you're likely to buy, the political party you're likely to vote for, you know, what sort of job you're likely to have." **John Ostler, Data Marketer**

But where does it end, and what are the consequences? Is your information secure? Not always, *Four Corners* reveals.

If your user patterns are valuable and being sold on the open market, should you have a say in it? Should you be told who your data is going to, and exactly how it is being used? If your data is being matched with other data for more valuable results, should you be informed?

Four Corners' investigation reveals that not only are we being tracked online by marketers but Australia's own government agencies are secretly monitoring our digital travels.

On the road, devices in your car are being logged to register your movements.

When you pass by a police car you will be surprised to discover what modern technology is discovering about you.

This kind of information is already being used in court cases, but public officials can access your data without a warrant and without your knowledge:

"That is one of the areas of law reform that we have to, I think, take the greatest interest in. Which agencies can access this material? What can they do with it? And where on earth are the courts... where's the legal oversight that applies to a regular search warrant?" **Scott Ludlam, Greens Senator**

The digital detectives are in shopping centres too, where your movements can be tracked to provide a physical profile of where you go and what you do. Millions of Australians hold supermarket loyalty cards. The data you give away to get them is now being cross-referenced with data from banks to better predict your behaviour.

Companies like Google and Facebook know more about you than your family or your best friends. How did we get to this point and should we care?

No political party has ever explicitly sought your permission for this to happen.

It is a situation that alarms many experts:

"I don't think any social system, any government, can survive knowing everything about its citizens without ultimately that being corrupted." **Danny O'Brien, Privacy Advocate**

"In Google We Trust", reported by Geoff Thompson and presented by Kerry O'Brien, goes to air on Monday 9th September at 8.30pm on ABC1. It is replayed on Tuesday 10th September at 11.35pm. It can also be seen on [ABC News 24](#) on Saturday at 8.00pm, [ABC iview](#) and at [abc.net.au/4corners](#).

Background Information

RESPONSES AND CORRESPONDENCE

Four Corners received feedback and responses to issues surrounding privacy and security from the following authorities, companies and sporting bodies that feature in the report "**In Google We Trust**". Read their responses:

- [New South Wales Police Response](#) [pdf 163kB]
- [NSW Roads and Maritime Services Response](#) [pdf 156kB]
- [Westfield Response](#) [pdf 151 Kb]
- [Woolworths Q&A Response](#) [pdf 315Kb]
- [US National Basketball Association Response](#) [pdf 152Kb]
- [National Rugby League Response](#) [pdf 150kB]

NEWS COVERAGE - PRIVACY, GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORITIES

[NSW Police photographing numberplates and storing data for five years](#) | ABC News | 9 Sep 2013 - NSW Police cars are photographing the numberplates of every vehicle they pass on the state's roads and storing the data in a vast searchable database with more than 200 million entries.

[Greens propose to force IT companies to disclose govt agreements](#) | ZD Net | 28 Aug 2013 - The Australian Greens party has proposed requiring IT providers to release to customers the exact details of their agreements with foreign governments over the provision of customer data.

[AUDIO: Internet privacy for Germans and Internet licences for kids](#) | Radio National | 7 Jul 2013 - Imagine you lived in a country that had survived a fascist government, world war and secret police: how would that change your attitude to surveillance? But when Deutschland demands data protection and privacy, it gets it.

[Government refuses to be drawn on whether MPs' emails are spied on](#) | ABC News | 20 Jun 2013 - The Federal Government has refused to confirm if the official or unofficial email addresses and the metadata content of federal parliamentarians is spied on by the US electronic spy program known as PRISM.

[Invasions of Privacy](#) | Aus Law Reform Commission | 12 June 2013 - On 12 June 2013, the Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus QC asked the Australian Law Reform Commission to conduct an inquiry into the protection of privacy in the digital era. The inquiry will address both prevention and remedies for serious invasions of privacy. The ALRC will provide its final report to the Attorney-General by June 2014. Read more.

[Australian government to assess PRISM impact](#) | CNet | 12 Jun 2013 - While cybersecurity is a "matter of real and present concern" for Australia, Foreign Minister Bob Carr has said that he doesn't think Australians should be concerned about PRISM, the secret National Security Agency (NSA) program to collect user data from some of the largest tech companies in the world.

[Metadata Requests: Telecommunications \(Interception and Access\) Act 1979](#) | 30 Jun 2012 - Last year there were more than 300,000 instances when Government agencies were able to access metadata. Government agencies which request metadata searches are required, by law, to publish the number of searches they undertake each year. A full list of the government agencies can be found on the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act annual report. *Go to pages 64-69.* [PDF 895Kb]

TECH NEWS, CORPORATIONS AND OTHER STORIES

[The Anonymous Internet Is Under Attack](#) | Gizmodo Australia | 6 Sep 2013 - Last week left cybersecurity nerds scratching their heads after traffic to Tor, the free software suite that enables anonymity online, quintupled in less than a week. It was obviously too good to be true, and now we know why. A Russian botnet is threatening to bring the whole network down.

[Woolworths: No ads, just data](#) | Ad News | 5 Sep 2013 - One of the country's biggest advertisers, Woolworths, said it doesn't need big splashy ad campaigns to launch its insurance offering. Because its database tells it the people it needs to target directly.

[AUDIO: Webdesign Tricking You, Facial Recognition Payment](#) | Radio National | 1 Sep 2013 - Buyer beware, you're being watched: Wearers of Google Glass might not have ads popping up in their vision; instead a "pay-per-gaze" system could track how long smart glass wearers look at advertisements in the real world, then charge advertising companies accordingly.

[Big customer data: the most valuable global currency](#) | ABC Tech & Games | 16 Jul 2013 - Now, more than ever, so much information is available, it has even been given a common name: "Big Data". Now it's time to examine the standards by which we operate as a global community and develop ways to better use data for business and public benefit.

[NSA Prism program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and others](#) | The Guardian | 7 Jun 2013 - Top-secret Prism program claims direct access to servers of firms including Google, Apple and Facebook. Companies deny any knowledge of program in operation since 2007.

[Quantum leap for Woolworths](#) | AFR | 2 May 2013 - Woolworths has opened up a new front in the war over customer data by making a strategic acquisition that will allow it to better analyse the shopping habits of Australians beyond its customer base.

[Find my car, find your car, find everybody's car; the Westfield's iPhone app privacy smorgasbord](#) | TroyHunt.com | 14 Sep 2011 - When news came through recently about the Bondi Westfield shopping

centre's new "Find my car" feature, the security and privacy implications almost jumped off the page...

FACEBOOK AND PRIVACY

[Opinion: The surveillance society is here](#) | Al Jazeera | 6 Sep 2013 - We must be aware of the surveillance tools introduced into our lives - especially those that we already consent to.

[Facebook says it received 546 data requests from Australian authorities in first six months of this year](#) | ABC News | 28 Aug 2013 - Facebook has revealed it received 546 requests from Australian authorities for information about its users in the first six months of this year.

[Facebook pays five users \\$22 million to settle privacy lawsuit](#) | The Age | 27 Aug 2013 - Facebook will have to pay \$US20 million (\$A22 million) to settle a lawsuit over targeted advertising despite objections that the deal did not go far enough to protect children's privacy.

[Reach for your privacy settings: Facebook graph search goes public](#) | The Independent UK | 8 Jul 2013 - Facebook is making its 'Graph Search' public today in an attempt to mine the wealth of data produced by users, utilising everything from places you've visited to your likes and photos.

[Facebook to pay \\$9.9 million to settle suit](#) | SMH | 18 Jun 2012 - Facebook Inc has agreed to pay \$US10 million (\$9.9 million) to charity to settle a lawsuit that accused the site of violating users' rights to control the use of their own names, photographs and likenesses, according to court documents made public over the weekend.

[Facebook hit with \\$15 billion class action user tracking lawsuit](#) | ZD Net | 18 May 2012 - Facebook is once again being sued for tracking its users even after they logout of the service. The latest class action lawsuit demands \$15 billion from Facebook for violating federal wiretap laws.

LINKS

The Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) is an intelligence agency in the Australian Government Department of Defence. www.dsd.gov.au/

Do Not Track has tips on how to stop your browser sending tracking information to third parties. donottrack.us/

DuckDuckGo is an Internet search engine that allows you to search the web anonymously. duckduckgo.com

Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) is a non-profit organisation promoting free speech, privacy, innovation, and consumer rights today. Danny O'Brien (<https://www.eff.org/about/staff/danny-obrien-0>) is group's the International Director. www.eff.org/

The Information and Privacy Commission NSW - www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/privacy/

Troyhunt.com Blog - Observations, musings and conjecture about the world of software and technology. www.troyhunt.com/

WATCH RELATED FOUR CORNERS

[HACKED! | 27 May 2013](#) - Andrew Fowler reveals that hackers, working from locations overseas, have targeted key Federal Government departments and major corporations in Australia.