

# High level of concern over privacy violations by business in New Zealand

Report by Eugene Oscapella

**T**HE NEW ZEALAND Privacy Commissioner has published results from a nationwide privacy survey of 750 New Zealanders conducted in September last year. The major findings relating to business are as follows:

## HANDLING OF INFORMATION BY NEW ZEALAND BUSINESSES

There were very high and reasonably even levels of declared concern about potential breaches of individual privacy by businesses.

91 per cent of New Zealanders surveyed declared they would be concerned (including 79 per cent very concerned) if a business to which they supplied their information for a specific purpose used it for another altogether different purpose.

89 per cent were concerned (including 78 per cent very concerned) if a business that they were not aware of gained access to their personal information.

87 per cent said they would be concerned (70 per cent very concerned) if a business asked them for personal information that did not seem relevant to the purpose of the transaction.

86 per cent expressed concern (76 per cent very concerned) over businesses that monitor their Internet activities without their knowledge.

In testing of the importance of the attributes in dealing with businesses, respect for and protection of personal information ranked almost as high as the quality of product or service. 93 per cent declared that respect for and protection of personal information was important. This included 78 per cent who considered that it was very important.

## OTHER FINDINGS

Individual privacy rated seventh on

the level of public concern out of nine major issues tested. 47 per cent declared they were concerned about individual privacy, 27 per cent were neutral and 25 per cent not concerned. 25 per cent declared they were very concerned and 10 per cent not concerned at all.

The level of concern on individual privacy was well below the 80 per cent level of concern declared for both health and crime and violence. It was similar to the levels of concern declared for the environment (53 per cent) and the power of Government (44 per cent).

There has been little change in the perceived level of need for the Privacy Commission in the last four years. 70 per cent consider the Privacy Commission necessary, 23 per cent consider it unnecessary, and 7 per cent are unsure.

There was also little change in the rating of the performance of the Privacy Commissioner. 45 per cent in total thought the Commissioner was doing an excellent or a good job, 32 per cent not that good or a poor job, and 23 per cent unsure.

Of 11 privacy issues tested, the security of personal details on the Internet emerged as the privacy issue New Zealanders were most concerned about. 84 per cent were concerned (including 65 per cent very concerned) on this issue. This was followed by confidentiality of medical records (74 per cent con-

cerned) and Government interception of telephone calls or e-mail (72 per cent concerned).

A majority of New Zealanders also declared concern about the privacy of personal details held for credit reporting, tracking people on the Internet, employer monitoring of e-mails, the availability of personal details on public registers and a compulsory ID number for every New Zealander.

A majority were concerned on data sharing between government departments and random drug testing of employees.

The only issue tested, over which there was little concern, was video surveillance in public places. 28 per cent declared they were concerned on this issue (including 19 per cent who were very concerned) and 53 per cent said that they were not concerned (including 35 per cent who were not concerned at all).



*Further information: see the New Zealand Privacy Commission's website at: [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz)*