



MEDIA RELEASE 12 December 2012

Biometrics Institute calls for caution in developing a national pupil data base as proposed by the UK government

London, Wednesday 12 December 2012. The independent international body representing biometrics users, academia and the industry have called for caution in developing a national pupil data base as proposed by the UK government.

Biometrics Institute Chief Executive Isabelle Moeller described the proposed data base as a challenge for privacy of UK citizens.

The Institute was responding to the UK Government's [call for public submissions](#) about the proposal to widen access to details about British pupils.

The proposal would allow private sector and other previously excluded groups to access the national data base in order to enable research, education planning and other services to be performed.

"For wider access, think Google and Facebook, for example" Ms Moeller said. "These will be major players in student learning in the very near future."

In its submission to the Government, the Biometrics Institute calls for a major privacy assessment to be conducted before the national pupil data base is opened for greater access.

The Biometrics Institute said that it was willing to work with the Department for Education to examine the privacy implications before any decision was made about regulatory or legislative change.

"The Biometrics Institute has developed a [Privacy Charter](#) which is a practical guide for senior and middle management to plan for an effective privacy regime. We are happy to work with the Government using this and other tools that have been developed by the Institute" Ms Moeller said.

The Biometrics Institute's submission pointed out that collected personal data of pupils could be extremely sensitive, such as parent's social and education background, student and parent finances and health, school reports, intelligence and social testing, home addresses, mental health issues and in some cases, biometrics such as fingerprints and face geometry.

"Privacy breaches can have dangerous and disturbing consequences," Terry Aulich said, who is the Chair of the Biometrics Institute Privacy Committee. "All parents and pupils need water-tight guarantees to prevent any personal data, whether it is linked or consolidated, getting into the wrong hands or being misused by external groups such as the media and marketers, and criminals. Children cannot exercise informed consent about how their data is used and their parents are often unaware of the risks."

The Institute's full submission is available on its website at www.biometricsinstitute.org

The Biometrics Institute was established as an independent not-for-profit organisation in Australia in 2001 and is now operating at an international level with over 120 members and offices in Sydney and London. Its members cover a wide range of vendors, users such as banks, airlines, governments and law enforcement authorities as well as research organisations.

The Biometrics Institute's constitution requires that vendors are represented on the Board but independence is assured by the majority control being vested in users. This guarantees independence from commercial control but assists vendors to act as good corporate citizens.

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