



THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS

The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and their school communities

Parents welcome President Obama's commitment to protect school children from data mining and demand similar safeguards for Australian students

Australia's peak parent body has welcomed U.S President Obama's landmark announcement this week to protect students from data mining and today called on the Australian Government and tech companies to implement similar protection measures for Australian students.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) has long argued for a ban on data-mining, where tech companies which provide computers and software services to schools are able to track students' online activities for profiling and marketing purposes, even if advertising features are turned off.

"President Obama's announcement sends a clear message that mining students' data by tech companies for marketing and profiling purposes is simply unacceptable," stated Margaret Leary, ACSSO President

President Obama announced that his administration will introduce a new education bill - the Student Digital Privacy Act - which would prevent tech companies that manage and analyse student data from selling it to third parties for non-educational purposes, and from engaging in targeted advertising to students.

He also called on all tech companies involved with U.S schools to commit to an industry pledge not to sell student information, target them with advertising or use their data for unauthorised purposes. More than 70 tech companies have signed up to the [Student Privacy Pledge](#) in the U.S so far.

ACSSO today called on tech companies that engage with schools in Australia to commit to a similar pledge immediately.

ACSSO will consult with Australia's political leaders to discuss potential legislative safeguards, similar to the President's Student Digital Privacy Act, to protect Australian students from data mining.

"School students' data and privacy should never be compromised," said ACSSO President Margaret Leary.

"It's now time that all tech companies that operate in Australian schools make a firm pledge not to sell student information, target them with ads, or use their data for any unauthorised purpose."

MEDIA RELEASE

“Australian parents now expect our political leaders to show similar leadership and introduce legislation to protect student data from commercial gain once and for all.”

[Research](#) shows Australian parents care deeply about the privacy of their children in the internet age. A [survey](#) conducted in partnership with ACSSO, revealed Australian parents overwhelmingly disapprove of any data tracking and mining of their children’s internet activity at school for marketing purposes and want the practice banned.

Many parents have been unaware of the potential for data mining and its consequences. ACSSO has worked with SafeGov over the last two years to increase awareness around potential for data mining of student browsing habits.

“This is a serious issue for our students and their privacy not just for now but well into their future,” Ms Leary said.

“Parents believe the Australian Government, tech companies and schools all have a responsibility to protect students’ sensitive data in Australian schools.

“Parents do not believe that providers should be able data mine students’ emails and web browsing for ad targeting purposes or any other non-educational purpose.”

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