



Speech by

JULIE ATTWOOD

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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RP DATA

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): I draw members' attention to the activities of a company called RP Data. A resident in my electorate complained to me about somebody taking a photograph of his house. That day, I spotted the culprit taking photographs of houses on Riverhills Road. When approached, he handed me a slip with RP Data's name on it. He said, "I am only doing the job I was paid to do."

I received several more complaints from residents in the electorate of Mount Ommaney. The office of the Minister for Fair Trading advised me that there was no law preventing this photographing of private residences. The next day I spoke to the manager of RP Data and he advised that it was collecting photographs of every house and structure in Brisbane for historical purposes. He did not know yet what he would be using them for, but it was to get an edge over his competitors.

Residents are concerned that this photographing is an invasion of their privacy and that RP Data could link these photographs to personal information about their property. Residents feel that this information could be sold to anyone, including criminals who would then have the opportunity to ransack their houses. RP Data argues that it is not an invasion of privacy and that anyone can simply take a photograph of a house.

If RP Data believes that what it is doing is ethical, then surely it is pure courtesy to let householders know and at the same time tell them that they can get their photograph deleted from that database. Why is it that RP Data are so covert in their operations? The expense of such a venture would surely be expected to produce a profit.

A person's home is that person's personal possession, and if others desperately desire to take a photograph of it, they should ask permission to do so. It belongs to the owner. The practice may not be outside the law, but the ethics of it are certainly questionable.

Numerous residents in my electorate have requested RP Data to delete their files. I support them in this action. Unfortunately, most residents would not know that their properties were on this database in the first place.
