DIGITAL RIGHTS WATCH

Annual Report 2019

OUR VISION IS FOR A DIGITAL WORLD WHERE ALL HUMANITY CAN THRIVE, AND WHERE DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY FLOURISHES.

TO ENSURE THIS, OUR DIGITAL WORLD MUST BE UNDERPINNED BY EQUALITY, FREEDOM AND ESTABLISHED HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES. ITS EVOLUTION AND FUTURE MUST BE GUIDED AND DRIVEN BY THE INTERESTS OF ALL PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENTS WE LIVE IN.

DIGITAL RIGHTS WATCH EXISTS TO DEFEND AND PROMOTE THIS VISION - TO ENSURE FAIRNESS, FREEDOMS AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD.

Digital Rights Watch acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the true custodians of this land that was never ceded and pay our respects to their cultures, and to elders past, present and emerging.

Image credit: Australian Progress

The defence of human rights in this country is, sadly, becoming incredibly important. The reality is that our rights have consistently been compromised by successive governments, through badly designed legislation, ineffective oversight mechanisms and a failure of our political system.

We're seeing a rise in the power of mono-capitalist technology platforms, an increase in surveillance operations in public and private spaces and the pervasiveness of technology that requires us to give up our individual privacy.

Our Government is contributing to this erosion, with warrantless mass surveillance of the public, attempts to stifle and control the free press, damaging anti-encryption laws and a rise in the use of unethical AI and algorithms in government service.

In early 2019, we were still reeling from the passage of the dangerous Assistance and Access Act - a truly horrifying example of the breakdown of our democratic processes. We saw blatant attacks on journalists who reported on national security matters, and a rapid increase in the use of facial recognition and surveillance technology by law enforcement.

But in the face of all this, there was also hope. We witnessed a parliamentary committee outright reject attempts from the government to establish a national facial recognition database. We saw a shift in public opinion that supported strong press freedom measures. We have started the process of educating local governments on how to properly and ethically manage the privacy of their residents.

Technological advancement is not just about intelligent design, clever cryptography or brilliant coding; it's also a function of power. To make technology work for people, we need to take this power back – and demand that the development of technology involve social, political and ethical considerations.

Just because technology does certain things now, doesn't mean it couldn't do them better. And just because technology gives us the power to do something does not mean that we should. These tensions are not simply technological, they are political.

Protecting our digital rights is about protecting democracy – it is about shifting power away from states and companies and towards people It's this work that Digital Rights Watch was set up to do, and will continue to undertake.

Tim Singleton Norton
Chair - Digital Rights Watch

DIGITAL CITIES CAMPAIGN

In 2019 we launched a flagship campaign to protect privacy and data rights of people in their local towns.

We produced policy documents and campaigning resources enabling the public to directly contact their local councillors and push councils to sign up to the Global Cities for Digital Rights program.

Australians expect to be able to live their lives without being watched, monitored and tracked. The concept that our cities need to be 'smart' needs to be managed alongside the freedoms of the people who inhabit them.

We'll continue to call on local government authorities to incorporate human rights principles such as privacy, freedom of expression, and democracy into digital platforms.

Image credit: Ennio Dybeli

Digital Rights Watch
Sponsored ·

You're female, between the ages of 25-60, you live in Melbourne and you're probably voting Labor.

DIGITALRIGHTSWATCH.ORG.AU
YOU'VE BEEN TARGETED
Politicians are buying your attention -...

Learn More

PRIVACY ACT CHANGES

We made the Privacy Act a key component of our 2019 Federal Election campaign, running a public education campaign on the current exemptions provided to political parties.

Our targeted online advertising drew attention to the extreme targeting that is undertaken by political parties during elections, revealing private information such as gender, location, spending habits and likely voting intention.

We will continue to push for changes to the Australian Privacy Act to apply it to political representatives, parties and their staff.

PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT

Our advocacy has highlighted the need for countless harmful pieces of federal and state legislation to be amended or repealed.

It's been welcoming to see some traction on this, with a parliamentary committee outright reject attempts from the government to establish a national facial recognition database.

Image credit: Aditya Joshi

ENCRYPTION LAWS

We continued our campaign against the Telecommunications and Other Legislation (Assistance and Access) Act, speaking out at events, forums and generating media interest in the impacts of this legislation.

We coordinated civil society evidence to Parliamentary reviews of the laws as well as the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor review of the Act.

Image credit: Chris Panas

SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION

We have been significantly involved in efforts to push social media companies towards more ethical data management processes, both within Australia and at the global level.

We have worked alongside social media companies and governments in developing more reasonable approaches towards the management of extremist social media content and takedown orders.

Image credit: Robin Warrell
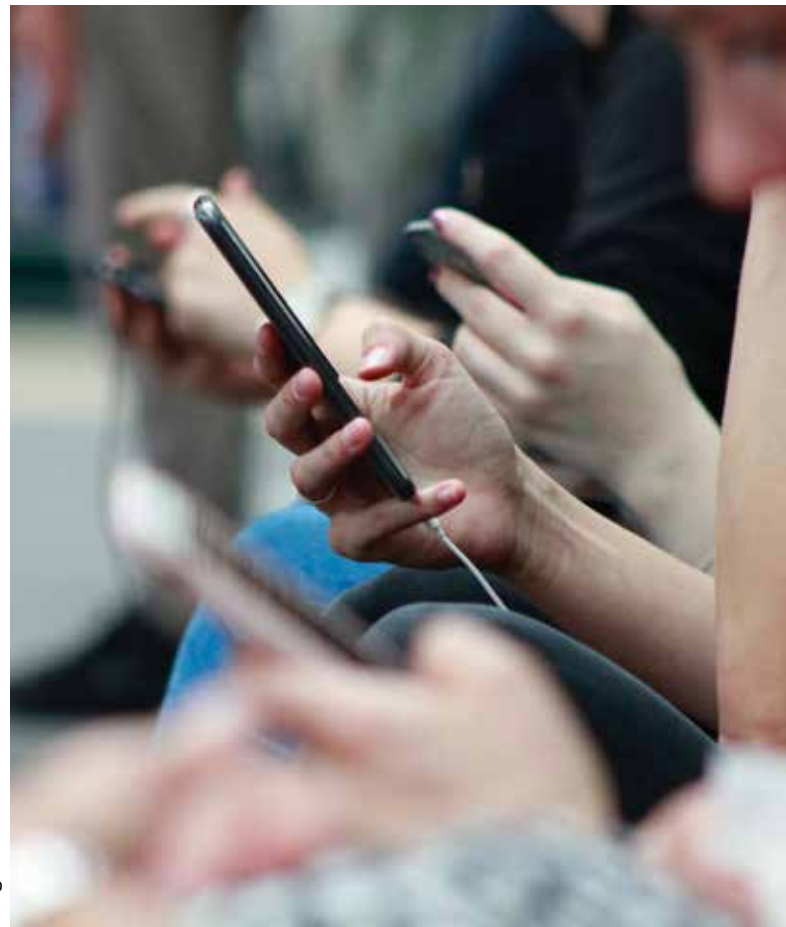
CORPORATE DATA ETHICS

We have begun the process of scoping a system that would enable data-holding companies to keep their practices accountable to users.

Corporate and government attacks on human rights to privacy, security, and liberty are increasing across the globe, and technology plays a central role in extending their reach. Technology can empower and grant freedoms to us all, but increasingly our online data is empowering data brokers, surveillance companies, and government agencies to discriminate against minorities, surveil populations, and exploit our human rights.

We will work with corporates, groups, academics and membership-based organisations on developing a standard for data ethics.

Image credit: Sean Pollock

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We worked with other academics and organisations to push for greater accountability in government use of algorithms and automated systems - including the robo-debt scandal within the welfare system, as well as the unethical and invasive MyHealth Record rollout.

Our plans for 2020 include an increase in focus on AI and automated decision-making.

Image credit Rock N Roll Monkey
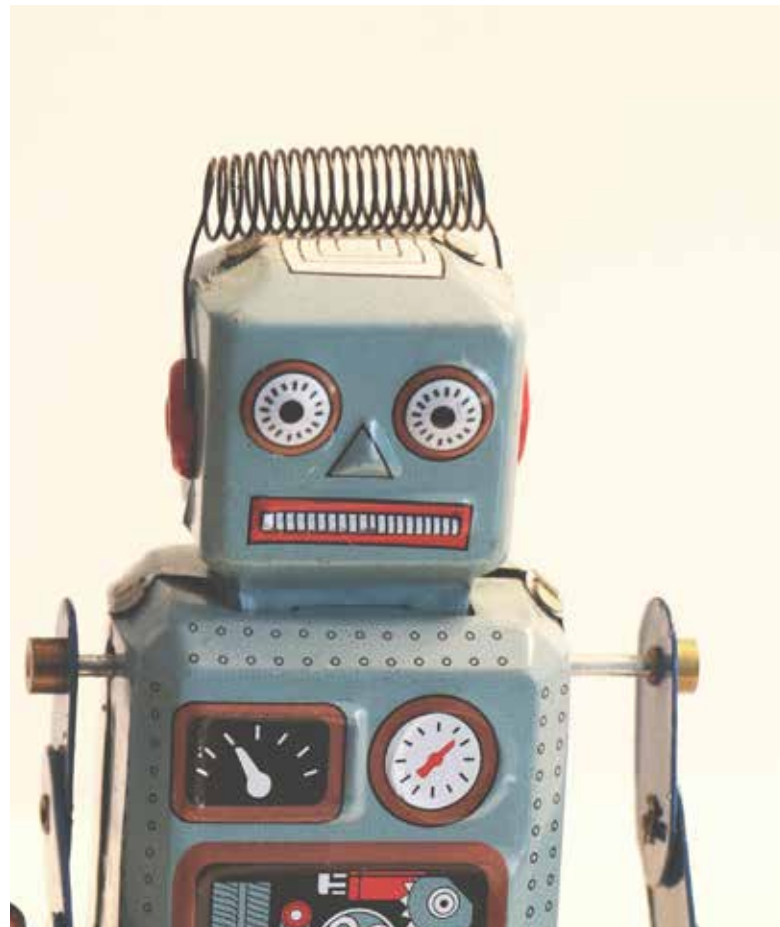
PRESS FREEDOMS

We supported the release of a report on the state of press freedoms in Australia, and called for a Media Freedom Act which will safeguard journalists, sources and whistleblowers.

Australia already lagged behind when it comes to press freedom. We are the only democracy on the planet that has not enshrined the right to a free press in our constitution or a charter or bill of rights. We have the most concentrated ownership of media in the developed world. Our defamation laws are less an instrument to address injustice and more a cudgel wielded by the wealthy to silence criticism. Press freedom is an essential element of any broader public discussion around a charter or bill of rights for Australia, but there are critical issues we should address immediately.

LIZZIE O'SHEA: GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS HERO

In June, Access Now announced its selection of Lizzie O'Shea, an Australian human rights lawyer, broadcaster, writer and founding board director of Digital Rights Watch, as a recipient of the 2019 Human Rights Heroes Award.

Ms O'Shea was recognized for leading work to highlight, analyze, and protest expansive surveillance laws in Australia. This included building an alliance across technology companies, civil society organizations, academics, and activists, and fronting media, public events, and parliamentary inquiries. Despite the laws being passed, the campaign had a huge mobilizing impact, with a strong coalition committed to working together and thousands of Australian citizens sparked to take action.

"In seeking to break encryption, government agencies prioritise their own interests over those of the citizen are supposed to protect.

They want to created technical tools they can stockpile as an arsenal of digital weapons to use against their enemies (whoever they may be). But this is like stockpiling weapons while claiming you are preparing for peace. It's not possible.

Activists are the people who will beat these digital swords into networked ploughshares."

- Lizzie O'Shea

Abvove: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet presenting the award to Ms O'Shea; Below: the four winners on stage at RightsCon Tunis.

AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

Digital Rights Watch was honoured to be a finalist in this year's Human Rights Community Organisation Award.

This was an important recognition of the need for solid digital rights protections in this country.

We offered heartful congratulations to Just Reinvest NSW for their win, which is a testament to the important work that they do.
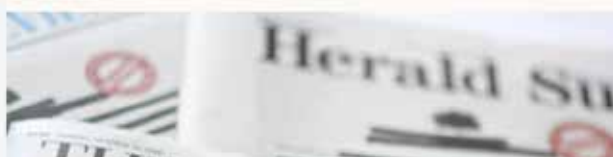
DIGITAL RIGHTS WATCH
IN THE MEDIA

Opinion

People have a right to be suspicious of journalists' self-advocacy, but press freedom is important

Tim Singleton Norton

We risk losing ground on broader issues of human rights if we allow dangerously invasive national security laws to pass

Herald Su

Darwin council promises not to use facial recognition technology in new CCTV cameras

Daily Telegraph

OPINION

Spies should focus on foreign threats rather than journalists

Let's call the shock raids by the federal police on journalist Annika Smethurst and the ABC what they are: dangerous police overreach that could intimidate and curtail our free press.

TIM SINGLETON NORTON
DIGITAL RIGHTS WATCH

7 NEWS

— Opinion

There are no easy fixes for the live streaming of real-life hate

Nicolas Suzor

New Republic

Digital Privacy Is a Class Issue

As corporations mine data and monetize the web, the divide between rich and poor on the Internet grows wider.

Be careful you are not giving away your privacy with Christmas gifts this year

Internet-connected devices are a tempting way to fill Christmas stockings, but our privacy is often traded away while we're swept up in the fun

23 Dec 2019   344

Councils urged to bake digital rights into smart cities as CCTV and facial recognition raise fears

The Canberra Times

Crossbench push for media protections

Essential poll

Three-quarters of Australians concerned about police raids on journalists, poll shows

Essential poll finds a high degree of concern about press freedom, metadata and the encryption legislation

Paul Karp

🐦 @Paul_Karp

Thu 25 Jul 2019 04.00 AEST

SATURDAY PAPER   🔍   LOGIN   ☰

Roughly three-quarters of Australians are concerned about police raids on journalists, government requests for telecommunications data, and laws that allow police to break encrypted WhatsApp messages, according to the latest Essential Poll. The survey of 1089 voters for the charity Digital Rights Watch was conducted before this week's revelations by the Commonwealth ombudsman of

What Price Are You Really Paying To Get Your 5th Coffee Free?

Australian governing parties hosed in digital rights election survey

Liberal and Nationals parties get lowest score in every category.

Federal election 2019: Politicians are tracking Australian voters for their data

ABC Science   By technology reporter Ariel Bogle

Perth council facial recognition trial greeted with concern and scepticism

Jacobin

It's Time to Throw Off Our Digital Chains

As data-mining companies and government decision-making edge ever closer, it is not just our digital privacy that's at risk, but our very capacity to organize in solidarity.

PUBLIC EVENTS AND OUTREACH

Our board and staff have spoken at a range of
Australian and international forums, conferences
and events. We engage with a wide variety
of professions, including legal, human rights,
technology and governance sectors and speak
about the legal, political and social barriers that
face digital rights in today's world.

Clockwise from above: Brisbane CryptoBar as part of Aaron Schwartz Day, Linux Conf 2020, McKell Cybersecurity Forum, NetThing, Deakin University Spyware Forum, Wikileaks and Press Freedom event at State Library of Victoria, FWD+Organise non-profit conference, RightsCon Tunis, Tunisia.

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Image credit: Avi Richards

January
• Advocated for greater public awareness of privacy risks in relation to the **My Health Record** rollout

February
• Presented at the **McKell Cybersecurity Forum** on the Assistance and Access Act.
• Joined an open letter on the EU's proposed Regulation on **Preventing the Dissemination of Terrorist Content Online**
• Spoke out against a rise in the **use of facial recognition systems** in public spaces
• Welcomed moves from the Victorian Government to push back on a Federal Government proposal to operate **facial recognition programs within state schools**

March
• Published an article on *Overland* on the need for accountability in **managing social media platforms** and their content
• Facilitated **digital rights public forum** with Australian Greens Senator Jordan Steele-John
• Advocated for a rights-based approach to the Australian Government's plans to **regulate social media companies** in the wake of the terrorist massacre in Christchurch
• Published an article in the *Australian Financial Review* on **extremist social media content** management

April
• Spoke out against the arrest of Wikileaks founder **Julian Assange** in London.
• Attended **Centre for Economic Development in Australia forum** on ethics in artificial intelligence

May
• Launched our **federal election scorecard,** rating the political parties on their policies in relation to digital rights
• Advocated for **changes to the Privacy Act** that allow political parties exemptions for tracking, targeting and communicating with the public
• Spoke out against the detention of digital rights activist **Ola Bini** in Ecuador
• Published article on *Long Reads* on **algorithm bias**
• Launched the **Save Australian Tech campaign**

in partnership with Electronic Frontiers Australia, outlining the impact of the Assistance & Access Act on the technology industry

June

- Presented at **RightsCon** in Tunis, Tunisia on Australia's Assistance and Access Act
- Published essay in *Meanjin* on the impact of the **Assistance and Access Act** on civil liberties and technology companies
- Participated in **Australian Progress' Leadership conference** in Canberra
- Board member Lizzie O'Shea received the **Global Human Rights Hero Award** at RightsCon in Tunis, Tunisia
- Launched the **Australian Cities for Digital Rights campaign**, asking local governments to take action to protect the privacy of their citizens in public spaces
- Published an article in the *Daily Telegraph* in partnership with Human Rights Law Centre on **Australian Federal Police raids** on the offices and homes of journalists
- Released guide for journalists on how to **digitally protect themselves** and their sources from government intervention

July

- Released polling showing that a majority of Australians are increasingly concerned about the **expansion of surveillance powers**
- Provided evidence to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security review of the **mandatory metadata retention scheme**
- Spoke out about Victorians being forced to use **facial recognition software** in order to access government solar rebates
- Called for repeal or major amendments to Australia's **mandatory metadata retention scheme**
- Attended **Melbourne Law School Digital Citizens Conference** in Melbourne
- Spoke out against **facial recognition software** in major retail stores
- Coordinated civil society evidence to **Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security** review of the Telecommunications and Other Legislation (Assistance and Access) Act 2018

August

- Spoke out against **internet shutdowns in West Papua,** calling for Australian government intervention to ensure free access
- Provided evidence with Blueprint for Free Speech to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security Submission inquiry into the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the **freedom of the press**
- Spoke at **SWARM conference** on the governance of online communities
- Joined doctors, lawyers and human rights experts in raising concerns over secondary use of **MyHealth Record** patient data
- Spoke at **Deakin University seminar** on the threats raised by consumer spyware
- Held inaugural **Digital Rights meet-up** in Melbourne

September

- Supported the release of **Breaking: Press Freedom in Australia report** with Getup!
- Welcomed moves by the Victorian Government to control federal access to driver's license photographs uploaded to the **national facial recognition database**
- Provided evidence to the **Independent National Security Legislation Monitor** review of the Telecommunications and Other Legislation (Assistance and Access) Act 2018
- Published an article on *The Baffler* on the **regulation of technology capitalism**
- Joined a global coalition of human rights groups condemning **internet shutdowns in Hong Kong**
- Spoke at La Trobe University Law School as guest lecturer on **national security legislation**
- Welcomed a report from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on **customer loyalty cards,** which called into question privacy protections

October

- Published article in *Guardian Australia* on the need for wider human rights frameworks to be incorporated into **press freedom campaigns**
- Presented at the **Monash Creative Directions conference** on the future of digital media
- Joined the global **WhyID campaign,** calling for greater protections to online identities
- Spoke at **Line X Intertrust Privacy event** in Paris, France on how to avoid digital dystopias
- Announced as a finalist organisation for the **Australian Human Rights Awards**
- Signed on to an open letter supporting

Image credit Kaitlyn Baker

Facebook's announced plans to proceed with **end-to-end encryption**
- Facilitated sessions at **NetThing** in Sydney
- Spoke out against a move by the Australian Government to allow Ministerial decisions over the **prosecution of journalists**

November
- Supported the **Aaron Schwartz Day Cryptobar** series, speaking at events in Brisbane and Melbourne
- Spoke at the **Consumer Policy Research Centre's Data (R)Evolution Conference**
- Supported the release of Tim Berners-Lee's **Contract for the Web**
- Attended the launch of the **Centre for Responsible Technology**
- Presented at **Monash University's Automated Culture Symposium** on digital rights
- Spoke at event exploring the relationship between the prosecution of **Julian Assange**, increases in national security legislation and freedom of the press
- Expressed concern over Victorian Police plans to operate **camera surveillance drones** on public beaches
- Spoke at **Internet Governance Forum** in Berlin, Germany

- Launched public mobilisation tools to support **Australian Cities for Digital Rights campaign**

December
- Signed an open letter to law enforcement officials in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia expressing concerns over attempts to break **encryption protocols**
- Spoke at **Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner event** exploring privacy as a human right
- Joined global **Stop Killer Robots campaign**, calling for restrictions on the use of artificial intelligence in drone warfare
- Published article in *Guardian Australia* on privacy concerns around **personal and home technology**
- Spoke out against exemptions being provided to telecommunication companies for them to **retain metadata securely**
- Joined the global campaign to **stop the private sale of .ORG** domain registrar
- Published article in *Jacobin* on state surveillance and the industry of **technology capitalism**
- Spoke at **FWD+Organise conference** in Sydney

ALLIANCES BOTH LOCAL AND GLOBAL

We pride ourselves on working in strong alliances of collaboration, both in Australia and across the world.

Digital Rights Watch is a member of:
• Alliance for a Safe and Secure Internet
• Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance
• Australian Progress Labs
• Biometric Surveillance Working Group
• Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
• CIVICUS World Alliance
• Fair Copyright Campaign
• Save Australian Tech Campaign
• Save Dot Org Campaign
• WhyID Campaign
• #KeepItOn campaign

Digital Rights Watch works with a range of organisational partners in the pursuit of strong digital rights.

Our partner organisations include:
- Access Now
- Amnesty International Australia
- Article 19
- The Australia Institute
- Australian Lawyers for Human Rights
- Australian Privacy Foundation
- Australian Progress
- Blueprint for Free Speech
- Castan Centre for Human Rights Law
- The Centre for Responsible Technology
- CHOICE
- Deakin University Criminology
- Digital Data & Society Consortium
- EDRi
- Electronic Frontiers Australia
- Electronic Frontiers Foundation
- Fight for the Future
- Future Wise
- GetUp!
- Hack for Privacy
- Human Rights Law Centre
- The Juice Media
- Liberty Victoria
- National Justice Project
- NSW Council for Civil Liberties
- Open Media
- Privacy International
- Purpose
- Queensland Council for Civil Liberties
- Queensland University of Technology
- Thoughtworks
- Wikileaks

SOME OF OUR NUMBERS
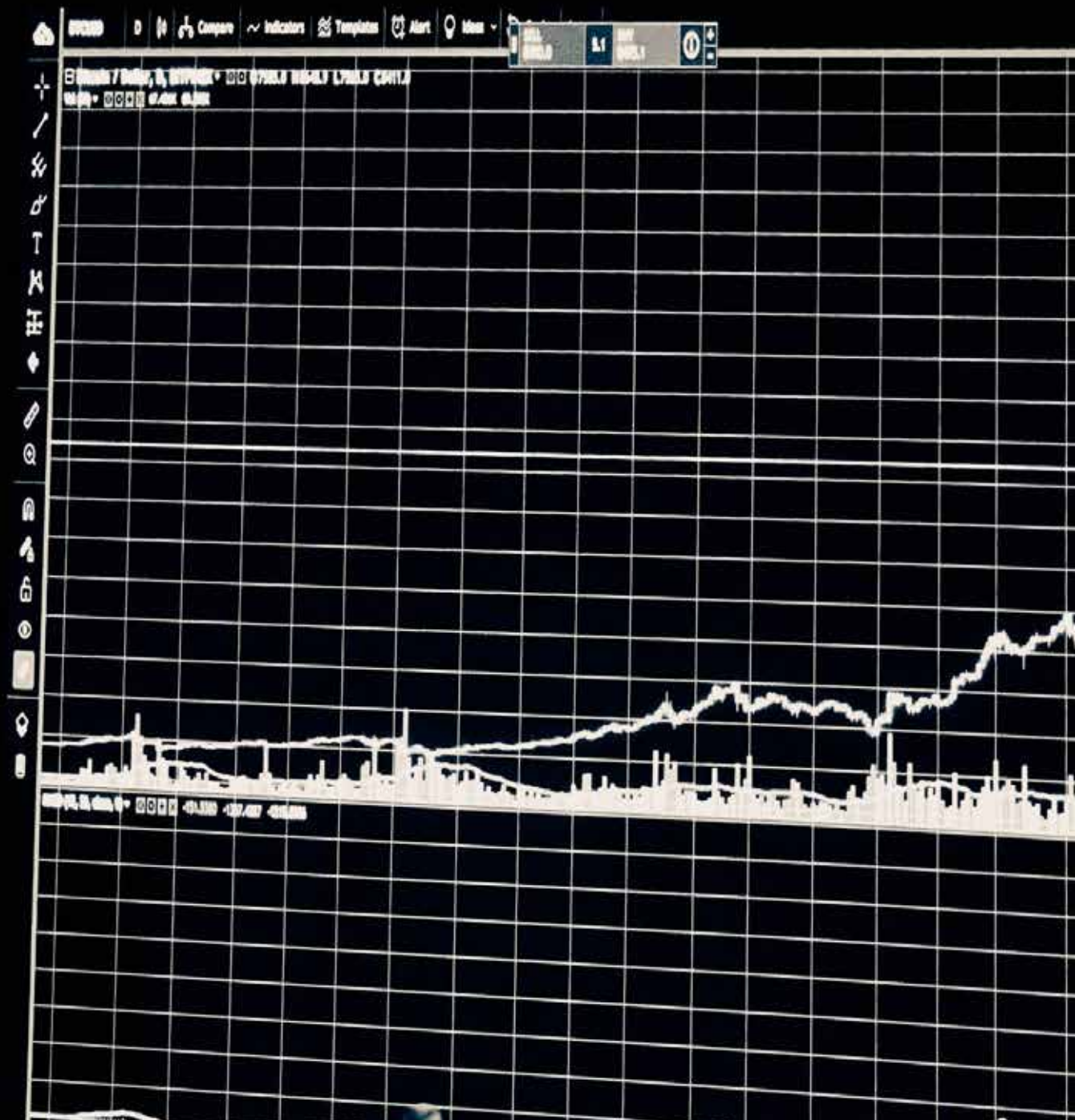
Members 163	**Events** 18
Formal members of the organisation	Speaking engagements and conferences
Supporters 14,511	**Media hits** 169
Individuals who have taken action with us	Opinion pieces, media articles and commentary
Donors 297	**Media reach** 18.6m
People who have financially supported us	Combined audience reach
Followers 6357	
Social media followers (Twitter + Facebook)	

digitalrightswatch.org.au/donate/

PUBLIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

We have put significant effort into the financial viability of Digital Rights Watch through the year - increasing our public donations and securing several philanthopic and government grants.

As a result, we were able to hire our first staff members this year. We will continue to build the stability of the organisation to operate independently.

**Public donations
for financial year 2018/19**

July 2018

June 2019

Image credit: Chris Livereni
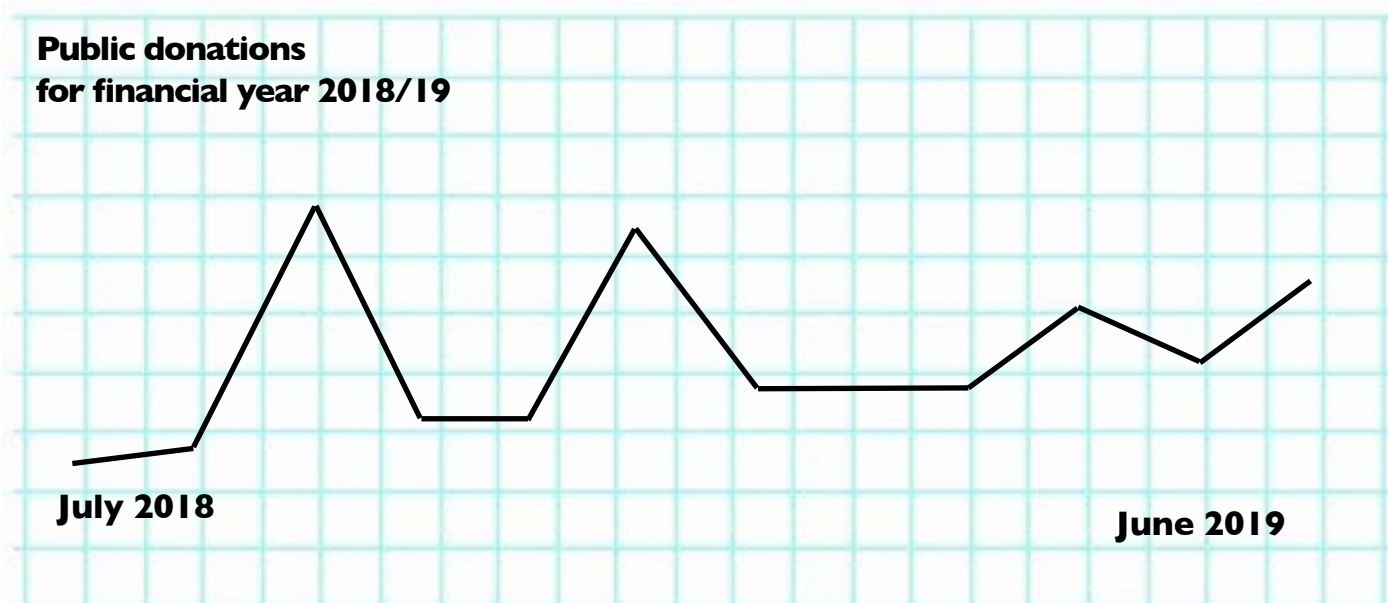
Profit and Loss

<p style="text-align:center">Digital Rights Watch Inc.
1 June 2018 to 30 June 2019</p>

	30 Jun 19
Income	
Consulting income	8,950
Donations	23,818
Grants	8,650
Interest Income	235
Merch Sales	145
Total Income	**41,799**
Gross Profit	**41,799**
Less Operating Expenses	
Accounting	225
Advertising	8,132
Conferences	1,050
Contractors & personnel	4,000
Office Expenses	1,680
Travel - National	2,862
Total Operating Expenses	**17,949**
Net Profit	**23,850**

Balance Sheet

Digital Rights Watch Inc.
As at 30 June 2019

	30 Jun 2019
Assets	
Bank	
DRW Main Account	33,126
DRW Payments Account	1,000
Total Bank	**34,126**
Current Assets	
Accounts Receivable	5,150
Total Current Assets	**5,150**
Total Assets	**39,276**
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Historical Adjustment	14,664
Rounding	(2)
Total Current Liabilities	**14,662**
Total Liabilities	**14,662**
Net Assets	**24,614**
Equity	
Current Year Earnings	24,614
Total Equity	**24,614**

OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2020

2020 is going to be a big year for Digital Rights Watch, as we aim to transition from a mostly volunteer-based organisation to an organisation that has permanent staffing and stronger capacity and means to implement projects and campaigns that defend and promote equality, freedom and established human rights principles in our digital world.

We will continue to work across government, business and community sectors, with a special emphasis on empowering the public to better understand and respond to digital rights issues.

We will increase our watch over technology's impact on our rights, with a focus on AI and automated decision making, and the use of data surveillance, biometrics and facial recognition by government agencies and corporations. We will engage directly with consultations and inquiries being undertaken entities such as the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. We will also watch and respond to attempts to manipulate public opinion through disinformation propagated through digital platforms, and ensure secure communications channels backed by legislation protects whistleblowers and the work of journalists. We will proactively work with business to introduce and promote ethical, rights-enabling technologies and processes, especially in relation to data and personal information.

Our strong relationships with partner organisations and the research community will strengthen our capacity to respond to draft legislation and advocate for policies that strengthen privacy and fundamental human rights in the digital and online world.

Image credit: Absolutvision
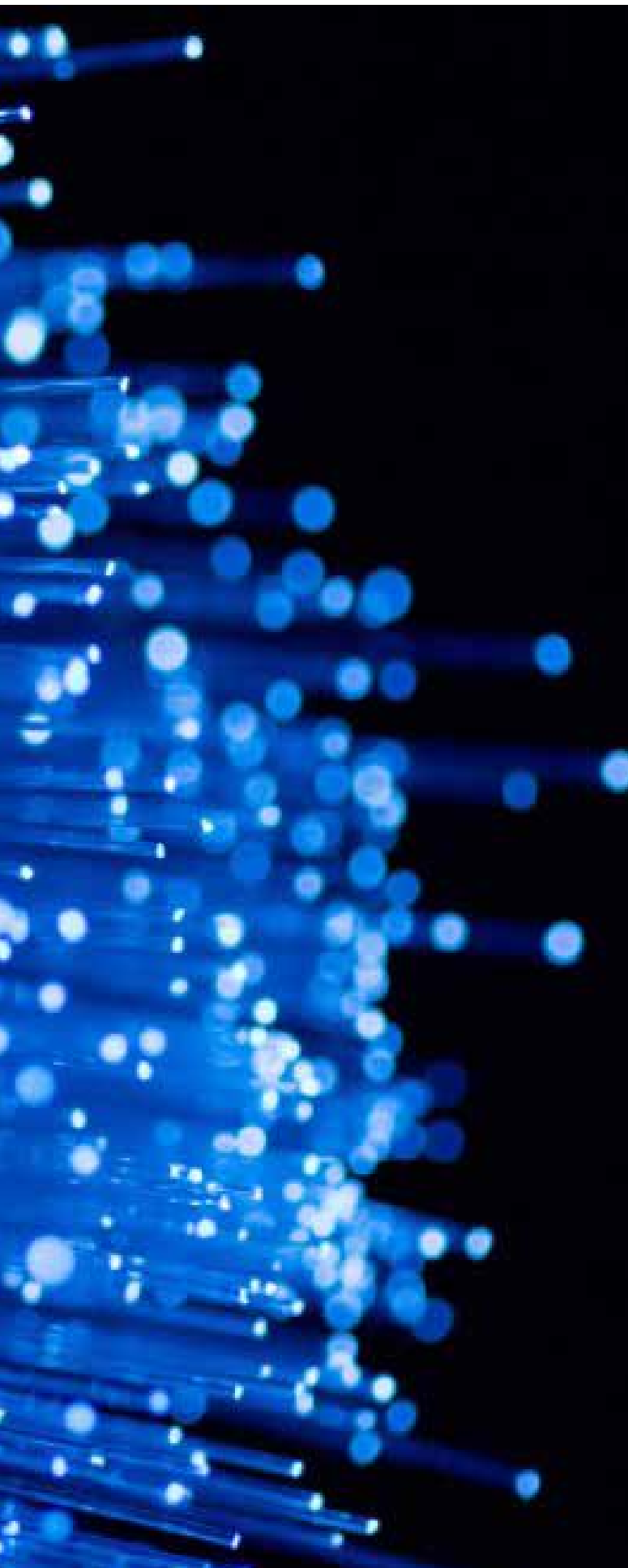
OUR STAFF

Sam de Silva - Director
Elissa Jenkins - Campaigner
Erin Farley - Media Manager

OUR BOARD

Tim Singleton Norton (Chair)
Nicolas Suzor (Deputy Chair)
Lizzie O'Shea (Secretary)
Tom Sulston (Treasurer)
David Paris
Vanessa Toholka
Lily Ryan
Roselina Press

THANKS

Kirsty Albion
Justin Clacherty
Tamsin Clarke
Chris Cooper
Elise Dalley
Hugh de Kretser
Robin Doherty
Suelette Dreyfus
Alice Drury
Amy Gray
Emily Howie
Lyndsey Jackson
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Kylie Pappalardo
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Asher Wolf