

Federal Police raid News Corp journalist Annika Smethurst's home over alleged national security leak

by ABC staff report via gus - ABC (Oz) *Tuesday, Jun 4 2019, 12:18am*

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Free Australia does not and should not need to emulate America in ANY Way -- we are NOT Americans

Police have raided the Canberra home of a News Corp journalist after she reported that the Federal Government was considering spying on Australians.

According to The Daily Telegraph, the raid related to a story published in April last year in which Annika Smethurst reported that the Home Affairs and Defence departments were considering giving spy agencies greater surveillance powers.

"This raid demonstrates a dangerous act of intimidation towards those committed to telling uncomfortable truths," a News Corp spokesperson said.

"The raid was outrageous and heavy-handed."

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) confirmed the raid took place earlier today amid an investigation into leaked information.

"The matter relates to an investigation into the alleged unauthorised disclosure of national security information that was referred to the AFP," the AFP said in a statement.

"This warrant relates to the alleged publishing of information classified as an official secret, which is an extremely serious matter that has the potential to undermine Australia's national security.

"No arrests are expected today as a result of this activity."

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) collects and assesses foreign intelligence information before passing it on to Australia's domestic and foreign spy agencies.

The ASD does not collect information on Australian citizens, but some senior public servants want to change that.

The story alleged new powers, if adopted, would go to the ASD to secretly access bank records, emails and text messages without leaving a trace.

Smethurst's article included images of letters between the two departments as they discussed the proposals.

Raid happens a year after referral

The Defence Department referred the leak to the AFP on April 29, 2018, the same day News Corp published the story.

Then foreign affairs minister Julie Bishop said at the time that she would not support the proposal if

it had been brought to cabinet.

The ABC has contacted Smethurst for comment.

"What's gone on this morning sends clear and dangerous signals to journalists and newsrooms across Australia," the News Corp spokesperson said.

"This will chill public-interest reporting."

Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery president David Crowe, from the Sydney Morning Herald and Age, was among the high-profile journalists to raise their concerns about the raid on Smethurst's home.

"This is a huge concern when [Annika Smethurst's] story was clearly in the public interest," he said on Twitter.

"Original story included images of letters outlining a plan to allow government hackers to 'proactively disrupt and covertly remove' cyber threats."

The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the union that represents journalists, described the raid as an "outrageous attack on press freedom".

"It is an outrage that more than a year after the story was reported in April, 2018, but just days after the federal election result, the Federal Police are now raiding a journalist's home in order to seize documents, computers and a mobile phone in order to track down the source," MEAA media president Marcus Strom said.

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<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-04/afp-raid-news-corp-journalist-annika-smethurst-home/11177052>

Inverse Times Open Publishing. <http://inversetimes.lingama.net/news/story-653.html>