

Data breach at the Australian Traffic Network reveals employees' personal information in process of seeking JobKeeper payments

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/apr/23/email-bungle-at-company-seeking-jobkeeper-payments-exposes-staffs-personal-details>

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Abstract:

The Australian Traffic Network ('ATN') has breached the privacy of more than a 100 current and former employees by sending their personal information to a large mailing list, while seeking information regarding their eligibility for JobKeeper payments.

The Guardian has reported that the ATN is seeking to take up the government's JobKeeper scheme to weather the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to the JobKeeper scheme, employers have to enrol in the program, and then have to confirm their staff's eligibility for the fortnightly payments. On 20 April 2020, ATN's finance manager, asked staff to confirm whether they met the eligibility criteria for the JobKeeper payment, in an email that was distributed potentially over a 1000 people. Reportedly, on 21 April 2020, a follow-up email was sent with a table of more than 100 current and former staff who had not responded to the original email, including their names, dates of birth, home addresses and email addresses.

The email's sender has advised that the email has been deleted from the company's email server and all those it had been sent to were contacted to advise them of the privacy breach, along with an apology and a request to delete the email. The Office of the Information Commissioner has also been notified of this data breach.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in organisations working in unusual, fast-paced circumstances, it is crucial to remain aware of the obligations to secure individuals' personal information, under the *Privacy Act 1988* and remain vigilant for the possible loss or breach of this data.

See our guidance on the [data breach notification regime](#), for information about your organisation's obligations if a data breach occurs.