

WIN

ROMANTIC MOUNTAIN GETAWAY

Clear Mountain Lodge is just 35 minutes north west of the city, an easy getaway from the city for a mind and body recharge. For short stays there is plenty to keep guests occupied from the tennis court to the swimming pool, or a choice of bushwalks through 20 hectares of state forest that surround the property. But best of all is the sunny deck that looks over pristine views of Lake Samsonvale and beyond – a perfect spot to relax and read your copy of *bmag*!

Read more about Clear Mountain Lodge in our travel story on page 42.

We have a Quick Romantic Stopover package to give away which includes one night accommodation in a standard room with chilled sparkling and chocolates on arrival plus breakfast and dinner for two.

Total prize value \$345

HOW TO ENTER

Enter at www.bmag.com.au or send your name, address and daytime telephone details to Clear Mountain, *bmag*, PO Box 477, Albion, 4010. Entries close 5pm on 20 April 2012. Prize valid until 30 June 2012 only. Entrants agree to receive future promotional offers from *bmag*. Terms and conditions on the website.

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Goodbye privacy

A private life is a thing of the past in the digital world. Alex Bernard reports

You don't have to be James Bond or have Secret Service clearance to have access to snappy little gadgets that can take pictures of people and record their conversations without their knowledge. Pens and watches that do the job can be picked up in electronics stores for around \$50. But, of course, you don't even need to be that tricky about it; anyone with a mobile phone these days can record sound and pictures that can end up going "viral" to haunt the subject forever on the internet.

It's not actually illegal to record a person's conversation without their permission; unethical, perhaps, but not illegal. However, it is illegal to record people on the phone without asking their permission first.

The phone hacking scandal that brought down Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* is a very public example of just how widespread invasion of privacy has become. And only last month Google notified users of all its services (including its search engine, email service, and popular video site, YouTube) that their personal information would be shared across those services to target them more specifically with advertising and content, and you can't opt out.

There's no doubt that protecting privacy is becoming an uphill battle. CCTV captures your movements across the city, credit cards and loyalty cards track your spending habits, smart phone applications store and help spread information about you and nightclubs can scan your driver's licence – and along the way, identity theft has become more prevalent.

In a nationwide study carried out recently by the University of Queensland's Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies 56 per cent of Australians said they don't want their

personal information used by marketers and advertisers to target them, 69 per cent refused to use a website or application because it collected too much personal information and 79 per cent simply refused to provide personal information.

Chief investigator for the study Dr Mark Andrejevic says more than 90 per cent of the survey's respondents also supported regulations that would allow them to control the capture and use of their personal information online.

"People want companies to be legally required to notify them at the time they are collecting personal information; at the moment, legally they don't have to do this after you've given your initial consent so they can continue to collect data and information about you whenever they like. [People we surveyed also] want companies to provide the ability to "opt out" of having their information collected, again not a legal requirement; and to allow users to request their personal information be deleted, which is a tricky one because legally, information should be deleted when it is 'no longer being used for the purpose for which it was intended', but it's up to the company to determine when that is. People want the right to determine when that should be," says Dr Andrejevic.

"In the online world, users are increasingly being asked to consent to the collection of detailed, personal information in exchange for access to online services. But most of us have very little idea about what information is being collected and how it's being used, so we can't provide informed consent," says Dr Andrejevic.

And if an organisation breaches an individual's privacy there's not a lot you can do about it. Tim Vines, director of Civil

Liberties Australia, says people can complain to the Privacy Commissioner but there really isn't a capacity to sue for damages. "It's a significant weakness in the law – it's got no teeth," says Vines.

In 2008 the Australian Law Reform Commission produced a report with 295 recommendations for new and tougher regulations but although the federal government announced at the end of last year that it would look at introducing a Bill into parliament early this year to implement a number of those reforms, there has been no word yet to indicate when that will happen.

According to federal Privacy Commissioner Timothy Pilgrim his office has received 895 complaints so far this year, and that figure is trending up but he admits he can't force an organisation to do anything. For now, Pilgrim advises people to think before they post [information online]. "Check out a company's privacy policy, it can be a challenge. But if you're in doubt ask why [they need your details]? Or contact someone in the organisation and ask what will happen to the information in the future. Always check online privacy settings, that's crucial."

Tim Vines agrees. "I wouldn't give out my personal details to someone on the street, so why would you do it online? Ask yourself is it worth it? What do I have to give up in order to gain access to this? We really need to educate ourselves about this."

Dr Mark Andrejevic says his survey results also showed that more than 60 per cent of respondents rarely or never read website privacy policies, but even if you did you may be none the wiser. "Online privacy policies tend to be vague about how information is being used and are often subject to change without warning," he says.

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