

Author:	Nick Deane
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Alice Springs has a long and proud history of association with modern forms of communication, going right back to the 1870s and the days of the Telegraph Station.

Communications – putting people in contact with one another – has had enormous benefits for us all; there is no question about that! However, there are aspects of present day communications that are much less benign.

The 'Communications Facility' at Pine Gap does rather more than simply put people in contact with one another.

It allows United States intelligence agencies to gather metadata – information that tells those agencies who is communicating with whom and when they are doing so. Effectively, this is espionage.

This is not a good thing for any ordinary citizen sending or receiving messages in the course of business or, dare I suggest, political discourse.

According to whistle-blower Edward Snowden, interception of communications (the gathering of metadata) is routine work at Pine Gap.

It is this work which allows the US to identify targets for its program of "extra-judicial" killings of suspected terrorists in distant lands. What is more, Pine Gap is probably also involved in the complex systems that guide the very drones that conduct the same killings.

I find this link between Australia, the shady world of espionage and the drone-strikes that have killed countless innocent civilians, extremely disturbing.

It is something that I, as a citizen, resent being associated with. For these reasons, I intend traveling all the way to Alice Springs to take part in events being organized by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) during the first weekend in October.

Nick Deane
Marrickville NSW

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