

Telecom 'spying' on its employees

By BRUCE JONES
Political Correspondent
UNIONS may take industrial action over claims Telecom is using "dirty tricks" and breaking privacy laws to spy on employees.

Telecom's alleged campaign involves gaining evidence to discredit workers, who have made compensation claims.

Democrat Senator Jean Jenkins told the Senate last week Telecom's activities included "bugging workers' homes."

She also said compo claimants were referred to by their case managers as "slimeballs".

She said the accusations were contained in a statement by a former member of Telecom's Protective Services branch.

Senator Jenkins said the man claimed:

- He and other Telecom employees and private investigators hired by Telecom did secret surveillance on hundreds of compensation recipients.
- Compo claimants had their



SENATOR JENKINS: complained car tyres 'let down' to see if they pumped them back up to improve their alleged physical disabilities.

People's pay was stopped to make them go to Telecom's office where they were covertly filmed.

He had been directed by his superior to use whatever methods to get the desired results, even when it was obvious the



NIM BEAZLEY: ordered report claimant was genuinely injured.

Claimants have had a "C-CASS" on their homes, which is a procedure where a computer can print out all numbers dialled on a home phone.

He was instructed to gain access to claimants' bank statements.

He overheard discussions on how to discredit the doctor

who had been sympathetic to repetitive strain injury (RSI) claimants.

Senator Jenkins said the "mere act of lodging a compensation claim appears to be justification enough for claimants to be surveilled, filmed, followed, photographed, set up, vilified and have their private lives laid bare."

"Such flagrantly undemocratic behaviour should not be tolerated in this country."

Len Cooper, acting secretary of the Australian Telecommunications Employees Association, yesterday described the allegations against Telecom, which include phone-tapping, as "dynamite".

Mr Cooper said the union was "horrified" Telecom could employ people to spy on workers' homes and activities and was considering industrial action.

"It is bloody outrageous," he said. Transport and Communications Minister Kim Beazley has asked Telecom for an urgent report on the allegations.

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