NEWS LESSON

The Glasses That Help One Person May Worry Another



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you notice if someone nearby was wearing a camera?
2. Would smart glasses make a conversation more comfortable or less?
3. Where would you most want people to put recording devices away?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**voyeurism**	☐	A	fair, reasonable and allowed by the rules
2	**invoked**	☐	B	used as a reason or an excuse for something
3	**legitimate**	☐	C	making sure that people obey a law
4	**credible**	☐	D	designed to help people who find daily tasks difficult
5	**enforcement**	☐	E	made much smaller than before
6	**assistive**	☐	F	believable and likely to work
7	**miniaturised**	☐	G	how easy something is for people with disabilities to use
8	**accessibility**	☐	H	the habit of secretly watching people for pleasure

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

As politicians consider restrictions on wearable technology capable of recording unsuspecting strangers, disability advocates warn that a crackdown could deprive thousands of people of newfound independence.

1 To a stranger on a train, a pair of smart glasses may look like ordinary spectacles, with no way of telling whether a camera is recording. To a user who is blind, the same glasses can read a recipe aloud or describe a room. Proposals to restrict imports have turned that difference into a political argument. People who rely on the glasses warn that a privacy measure could also take away useful help.

2 Chris Edwards, who is blind and works with Vision Australia, uses AI-enabled glasses to obtain information that sighted people often take for granted. The devices can read recipes, describe household controls and provide directions while he walks with his guide dog. Matt Henderson, who has been deaf since birth, uses glasses that display live captions, allowing him to participate more confidently in professional meetings. For both men, hands-free access to information reduces reliance on other people and makes routine activities less demanding.

3 Yet the accessibility benefits coexist with a genuine security problem. Miniaturised cameras can blur the distinction between looking at someone and recording them. In sensitive environments, including schools, workplaces and changing rooms, the prospect of covert footage throws up obvious concerns about consent. Cheap devices may also lack adequate safeguards against unauthorised access. As wearable technology becomes less conspicuous, the social signals that normally indicate recording become increasingly unreliable. Norms built around the visible act of raising a phone offer little guidance once a camera sits permanently at eye level, leaving bystanders to take a stranger's word for it.

4 The Australian Greens proposed legislation in 2026 calling for a temporary prohibition on imports of camera-enabled wearable devices, with exemptions for genuine disability aids and additional privacy safeguards. The federal government, however, said it was not planning an import ban and was pursuing broader privacy reforms. The measure was therefore a political proposal, not an existing national prohibition. Its significance lay partly in giving rise to a public discussion about whether current laws can keep pace with recording technology that is becoming both cheaper and harder to recognise.

5 Disability organisations have been alarmed by rhetoric portraying the glasses primarily as instruments of voyeurism. A device that helps someone navigate a supermarket or understand a conversation should not become a source of suspicion or stigma. Equally, accessibility cannot be invoked as a blanket justification for unrestricted recording. Any sensible approach must distinguish between legitimate assistive functions and the misuse of cameras or personal data, while acknowledging that the boundary may not always be obvious to bystanders.

6 The most credible regulatory options include clearer recording indicators, minimum security standards, restrictions on covert filming and accessible complaints procedures. None is foolproof, and enforcement becomes progressively harder as devices shrink, multiply and evolve beyond the categories the law was written for. But the choice need not be between banning useful technology and abandoning privacy altogether. Smart glasses reveal the difficulty of governing tools whose value depends on context. A camera can undermine one person's autonomy while helping another regain it. Lawmakers who ignore either side risk solving one problem by creating another.

Sources: Australian Greens. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer implies that habits built around phones no longer protect privacy once cameras sit in glasses. T F NG
2. The Greens' proposal would have restricted imports of glasses sold as disability aids. T F NG
3. Vision Australia asked the federal government to reject the import ban. T F NG
4. The writer believes the only choices are banning smart glasses or ignoring privacy. T F NG
5. The government's privacy plans were wider in scope than the Greens' proposal. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

bystanders	covert	exemptions	loophole	prohibition	rhetoric	safeguards	stigma

1. A _____ operation depends on nobody knowing that it exists.
2. Politicians often resort to alarmist _____ when they want support for tougher laws.
3. Many people avoid seeking help because of the lingering _____ that makes them ashamed of needing it.
4. Several _____ filmed the argument on their phones instead of intervening.
5. Without adequate _____ , personal data can easily be misused.
6. The council introduced a complete _____ on smoking in the city's parks.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Critics pointed to the _____ in the wording of the law. (AMBIGUOUS)
2. Campaigners accused the firm of _____ in protecting customer data. (NEGLIGENT)
3. The new rule is likely to prove _____ for small businesses. (PROBLEM)
4. Campaigners demanded greater _____ about how the footage was stored. (TRANSPARENT)
5. Her _____ to wear the glasses in public surprised her colleagues. (RELUCTANT)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Formal linkers. Albeit means although and introduces a short contrast; thereby shows a result; lest means in case.

albeit	hence	lest	nonetheless	notwithstanding	thereby	whereby

1. _____ the benefits to disabled users, many campaigners want tighter controls.
2. The glasses are discreet, _____ not completely invisible.
3. The device records continuously, _____ raising concerns about consent.
4. Cameras are shrinking fast; _____ , current laws may soon prove inadequate.
5. Wearers should say clearly when they are recording, _____ bystanders feel deceived.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Should a visible recording light be enough to make filming strangers acceptable?
2. What rule would let useful smart glasses coexist with privacy?
3. Would your answer change if the glasses helped someone see or hear?

9 Role-play: glasses in the cafe

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the cafe manager

A customer is wearing smart glasses with a camera. Two other customers have complained. Politely ask what the glasses do. Decide if the customer can keep them on, and say why.

Student B · the customer

You wear smart glasses to read the menu and signs because your eyesight is poor. You aren't recording anyone. Explain this calmly and suggest a way to make people feel comfortable.

Useful phrases

Excuse me, could I ask about your glasses?

I'm not recording anyone, I promise.

Some customers aren't comfortable with cameras.

I'd be happy to show you how they work.

Could we find a compromise?

That's fair, I'll make sure the light is visible.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the manager and the customer agree, and was the solution fair to everyone?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 B · 3 A · 4 F · 5 C · 6 D · 7 E · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 covert · 2 rhetoric · 3 stigma · 4 bystanders · 5 safeguards · 6 prohibition

6 Word forms

1 ambiguity · 2 negligence · 3 problematic · 4 transparency · 5 reluctance

7 Language focus

1 Notwithstanding · 2 albeit · 3 thereby · 4 hence · 5 lest

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