AUSTRALIA will not introduce a national identification card because of the fear of identity theft by criminals, Attorney-General Philip Ruddock said.

Mr Ruddock today rejected media reports that the federal Government was considering introducing a national ID card.

His comments come as the British government legislates to introduce the country's first national ID card since World War II.

The UK cards, which Prime Minister Tony Blair says are necessary to fight terrorism, fraud and illegal immigration, will include biometric details such as iris scans and fingerprints.

But Mr Ruddock told a security technology conference in Sydney today a national ID card could actually compromise Australians' security.

"We haven't supported an approach where all personal information is centralised on one database and a single form of identification is used," Mr Ruddock told the gathering of government, security and business leaders.

"Such an approach could actually increase the risk of identity fraud because only one document would need to be counterfeited to establish an identity."

Outside the forum, Mr Ruddock said the government wanted to step up security of existing personal identification documents such as passports, birth certificates and drivers' licences.

"We are not about developing a national ID card, we are about improving identity security arrangements - that's the approach we're taking," he told reporters.

"There is nothing that is more intrusive than to have someone steal your identity."

The government was pushing ahead with plans to introduce computer-chipped "E-passports" to reduce the risk of identity fraud and protect people's privacy, Mr Ruddock said.

Holders of existing valid passports could continue to use their passports until they expired, he said.

The new passports will be introduced in October.

/AAP/

*This report appears on australianIT.com.au.*