



HUMANIST SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

(Reg. No. A0020272M)

Affiliated with the Council of Australian Humanist Societies (CAHS)
and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), London, UK

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12 April 2015.

Hon Roger Gyles AO QC
Acting Independent National Security Legislation Monitor
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600
INSLMsubmissions@pmc.gov.au

Dear Sir,

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATION MONITOR REVIEW 2015

SUBMISSION FROM THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

The Humanist Society of Victoria (HSV) is a secular organisation whose members foster an ethical, rational and responsible approach to life. HSV supports human rights, democratic processes, and a just and inclusive governance.

HSV seeks to alleviate suffering, to promote well-being and the circumstances where all individuals can attain their full potential. It engages in educational and charitable activities.

The views that follow have been formulated at specially convened group discussions to which all HSV members are invited. Further supportive evidence has been obtained from print publications, the Internet, the mass media and from individuals with relevant experience.

The President, Vice-President and Submissions Conveners of the HSV are authorised to present these views.

The Humanist Society of Victoria appreciates the opportunity to make a submission.

Victorian Humanists recognise the obligation for Australia to strike a balance between protection against perceived threats versus protection of our human rights, civil liberties and individual freedoms. We also welcome every opportunity to question whether or not some aspects of Australia's legislation are necessary.

We see the provision of an ongoing, independent monitor as being vital to ensure that civil liberties are not diminished in the name of national security. An impartial and fully empowered independent monitor (INSLM) is an important opportunity to ensure that human rights are protected within Australian legislation.

Victorian Humanists submit the following points for your consideration:

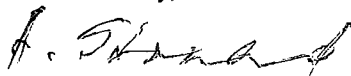
1. All Australian legislation must be fully consistent with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and all other relevant human rights treaties and principles to which Australia is a signatory.
2. There must be an ongoing and independent audit of Australia's laws, and an assessment on whether any restrictions upon civil liberties have proved to be effective, necessary and/or disproportionate to any threat which is faced by Australia.
3. Australia's current treatment of refugees and asylum seekers is inconsistent with the principles of both Australian and international law. Asylum seekers and refugees generally pose no significant threat to national security.
4. We question whether current metadata legislation may violate the presumption of innocence. We also submit that security legislation which disproportionately restricts an independent media is inconsistent with the principles of democracy, transparent governance, and free speech. We support the INSLM in holding the government accountable to redress such excesses.

We are mindful of words attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Victorian Humanists respectfully suggest that the primary purpose of our laws is to protect the lives, safety, welfare and freedoms of human beings, and that considerations such as 'national security' can only be contextualised through the lens of human rights. We ask that the Australian Parliament fulfils its foremost obligation to protect human rights and freedoms.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours faithfully,



Halina Strnad
Co-Convenor
Submissions Committee
Humanist Society of Victoria Inc.