

National Human Rights Consultation Submission

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Submission Text:

Members of the National Human Rights Consultation Round-table and Human Rights Commission,

State and Australian Federal Police – over past 2 years have committed numerous human rights violations – including at least one high profile death in custody, a shooting or two of unarmed females and/or children, the mace/pepper spraying of non-threatening inmates, and furthermore the inhumane conditions in A.C.T correctional facilities. These inhumane conditions have been credited to largely contributing to escape attempts and inmate protests and riots. In other societies, such as Greece in recent months, any one of such concerns regarding the behaviour of law enforcement and their apparent disrespect for various human rights are met with civil unrest. Although I am sure each of these incidents have, or are, being investigated by a Police Commission of sorts, I believe all law enforcement agencies in Australia must be more vigilant of human rights in respect to their occupation and subsequent powers.

I wish not to directly address specific human rights violations, as such, but rather my concern is with the general attitude of law enforcement agencies to a variety of human rights issues. At the very least it seems evident that members of law enforcement should be counseled/educated on the job on such human rights matters, but furthermore, I believe that the Australian Human Rights Commission can do more in holding law enforcement agencies to account. This could be achieved by the publication of a transparent annual, bi-annual or semi-annual report by the Human Rights Commission reporting on incidents of concern as well as those worthy of praise in regard to law enforcement agencies and human rights issues.

On a side note, I believe that Australia is deeply in need of a nation bill on human rights, whether Australia becomes a republic or not. Although perhaps not currently under massive threat, Australians freedom of speech, expression and religion are not currently safeguarded to the degree they need to be. This was also the consensus of my university classmates when discussing the topic last year. [I found it strange that the web-pages for this consultation seem to be attempting to dispel discussion for such a bill.] Perhaps such a bill could have protected the citizens of the Northern Territory who were/are victims of the numerous human rights abuses which constitute the “Northern Territory Intervention”, of which there are too many civil, political, economic, social and cultural right infractions to mention. I do hope that the “Northern Territory Intervention” policies will be a hot point of discussion at tonight’s round-table.

Sincerely,
Ross Goodin