



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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13 April 2014.

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Repeal Bill 2014

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 for the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Repeal Bill 2014.

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 security legislation may remain necessary.

We see the provision of an independent monitor as being vital to ensure that civil liberties are not diminished in the name of national security.

We therefore oppose the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Repeal Bill 2014.

Victorian Humanists submit the following points for your consideration:

1. All Australian anti-terrorist and national security legislation must be fully consistent with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and all other relevant international treaties and principles to which Australia is a signatory.
2. There must be an ongoing and independent audit of Australia's security laws, and an assessment on whether they have proved to be effective, necessary and/or disproportionate to the 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.

An impartial and fully empowered independent monitor (INSLM) is the best way to ensure that human rights are protected within Australian security legislation. The vital work of the INSLM must be allowed to continue, and not discarded simply for the sake of false economy.

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 remains mindful of its foremost obligation and duty to protect human rights and freedoms, and allows the INSLM to continue its work.

We therefore ask that the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Repeal Bill 2014 be opposed.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours faithfully,

Geoff Allshorn
Co-Convenor
Submissions Committee
Humanist Society of Victoria Inc.