

"Denying penitentiary inmates the right to vote is more likely to send messages that undermine respect for the law and democracy than messages that enhance those values."

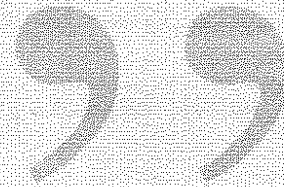
**Chief Justice McLachlin
of the Canadian Supreme Court**

"Prisoners lose their liberty, not their place in the human race nor their position in the society."

Recent European Court of Human Rights ruling

... every citizen shall have the right to vote at elections under universal suffrage without a distinction of any kind on the basis of race, sex or other status.

**International Covenant
on Civil and Political Rights**



*Voting is a democratic
duty not a privilege*

*Don't let Howard
tighten the screws on
the prisoners' vote.*

**Visit Justice Action website
for more detailed information:
www.justiceaction.org.au**



PO Box 386, Broadway NSW 2007
p: (02) 9660 9111
f: (02) 9660 9100
e: ja@justiceaction.org.au
w: www.justiceaction.org.au

PRISONERS' VOTE



*John Howard
sentences prisoners
to civic death*

The coalition wants all prisoners barred from voting in federal elections.

Currently Australian prisoners serving sentences of less than three years can vote in federal elections.

In Aug 2004 Federal Parliament restricted the right to vote to those serving sentences of three years or less.

Now the coalition wants all prisoners barred from voting in federal elections with the introduction of Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Bill.

Prisoners' vote gets life! But they're crims anyway ... why should they vote?

There is no evidence that disenfranchising prisoners deters crime or assists in rehabilitation.

It is more likely to increase alienation and disengagement from mainstream society and any sense of civic responsibility.

This would disenfranchise 25,353 voters of which more than half are expected to serve sentences of less than two years; ie who are likely to be released within a political term.

It is a double disenfranchisement for the 5,656 Indigenous people in jail who lost their ATSIC vote last year.

Countries like Canada and South Africa have already removed such blatantly discriminatory laws.

So why is the Government bothering?

It is cheap law and order politics.

Removing prisoners' political voice means politicians can now officially ignore prisons and prisoners. They have sentenced them to civic death.

What's the logic?

Previously Senator Nick Minchin said "*any 'pub test' would find that law-abiding citizens resented allowing prisoners the vote*". (24/06/04)

There is no logical connection between committing an offence and the right to vote regardless of what pub this so-called test was conducted in.

Australia – international pariahs ... again!

Fellow Commonwealth Nations like Canada and South Africa have removed such blatantly discriminatory laws.

"Denying penitentiary inmates the right to vote is more likely to send messages that undermine respect for the law and democracy than messages that enhance those values," Chief Justice McLachlin of the Canadian Supreme Court, *Sauve v Canada* (10/12/02).

The European Court of Human Rights recently ruled in favour of giving British prisoners the vote, *"Prisoners lose their liberty, not their place in the human race nor their position in the society."* *Hirst v the United Kingdom No 2* (6/10/05).

Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 25, in combination with Article 2, provides that every citizen shall have the right to vote at elections under universal suffrage without a distinction of any kind on the basis of race, sex or other status.

The right to vote is not a selective reward for those who the Government decides are morally decent. It is a fundamental citizenship right in a constitutional democracy.

Voting is a democratic duty not a privilege