



Media Release: PRISONERS' RIGHT TO VOTE HEARING

Today the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee will be taking evidence from four members of Justice Action on whether Australian prisoners should continue to have the right to vote.

The Prime Minister's Office justifies this attack on prisoners' democratic status thus: "The government believes that a prison term should include some level of deterrent (sic) through a denial of certain freedoms for the period of the custodial sentence. (letter Tony Nutt 26/2/06)

"Prisoners already have lost their families, their homes, their jobs and feel like slaves in all facets of their lives. Is the vote the effective deterrent to stop crime?" asked spokesperson Brett Collins.

"This move is only cheap law and order politics where the safety of the public is being jeopardised by further alienating prisoners from the community. The rising recidivist rate of 45% represents a lot of victims" said Les Connolly.

Internationally Canada, South Africa and the UK have recently moved to restore the prisoner vote.

Prisoners were not notified nor have been allowed to defend themselves against this fundamental attack on their democratic status" said Kat Armstrong .

"Some states like WA, after an approach from our organisation have provided an opportunity to prisoners to defend their democratic status, but Tasmania refused to inform their prisoners. They said: "Please note that the Tasmania Prison Service has neither an obligation nor the resources to arrange for prisoner submissions to the Senate Committee. Prisoners who are aware of the Senate's hearings through normal media outlets may if they wish make submissions."

Further information:

Brett Collins 0438 705003

Kat Armstrong: 0428 312035

Les Connolly 0404 251755