

Terms of reference drawn up for RC into COVID handling

Three COVID pandemic inquiries have recently reported, patchily.

The best of them came from a Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs (SLCA) committee, which inquired into whether a royal commission should be created to examine the key elements of the pandemic's emergency phase, and what its terms of reference (ToR) should be.

The SLCA system has two committees: one is a Legislation committee, which is chaired by a government (ie, Labor) MP; the other is the References committee, which is chaired by a Coalition MP, Paul Scarr of Queensland.

Scarr's Coalition-led SLCA References committee found:

The committee considers that there is an overwhelming case for the establishment of a COVID-19 royal commission.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact upon Australia. The health and economic cost of the COVID-19 pandemic was extraordinary. This includes the impact upon individual Australians and their families.

The committee said a royal commission should investigate virus testing, contact tracing, quarantine protocols, the impact of lockdowns, the procurement of vaccines and the capacity of the health, education, aged care and housing and domestic violence systems to respond to the crisis.

In its submissions to this committee, CLA called for the terms of reference to "examine how complaints can be handled quickly and efficiently when rights are breached, preferably by access to state and federal human rights acts" [footnote 127]. The royal commission should be in a position to "make recommendations about how civil rights and restrictions in pandemics can be balanced" [128].

In making a detailed recommendation for the ToR for a Royal Commission, the committee said, among other things, that the RC should consider:

(e) the effectiveness and appropriateness **including from a human rights perspective** (emphasis added - Ed.) of public health orders and policies, including:

- (i) lockdowns;
- (ii) school closures;
- (iii) social distancing;
- (iv) remote working arrangements;
- (v) mask mandates;
- (vi) interstate border closures;
- (vii) international border closures;
- (viii) quarantine arrangements; and
- (ix) vaccination, including vaccine mandates imposed by both government and non-government organisations. <https://tinyurl.com/42xwh4v6>

ODD SPOT: There is already a major public inquiry into the pandemic

Robyn Kruk (photo), who has held a large number of very senior public service jobs in NSW and federally, is co-leading an inquiry (which was announced in September 2023) into the federal government's COVID-19 response.

It is being run by a task force set up in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and is due to report by 30 Sept 2024.

Two other inquiry panel members are Deakin University chair in epidemiology Professor Catherine Bennett and Women in Economics Network national chair Dr Angela Jackson.

Announcing the Kruk inquiry, PM Anthony Albanese said: "This inquiry will look at the government's responses and will give advice on what worked, what didn't, and what we can do in the future to best protect Australians from the worst of any future events." <https://tinyurl.com/4zu9dtdv>



Two other COVID inquiries largely forget the people

Two other COVID inquiries by federal parliament committees reported last month.

The main one, the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19, was chaired by Labor Senator Katy Gallagher. It was unwilling to directly address how “emergency” legislation allowed abuse by governments, police and health authorities of the civil liberties and rights of citizens during the pandemic.

A Royal Commission to review handling of the pandemic was one of 19 major recommendations. Establishing a “disease control centre” was another.

To read the reports of this committee is to feel the pandemic happened TO government, not to and against people, many of whom died and many, many more – and their families – who suffered.

But nowhere was there any clear focus of the rights of Australians during any emergency, health pandemic or other variety.

There was a throwaway line of supporting “the vulnerable”...but we were all vulnerable to police and health excesses of lockdowns, mask-wearing instructions, vaccination mandate confusion, orders to not go to work or school, not to travel to see relatives even if they were dying or being buried, and a myriad other restrictions, nonsenses and failures to recognise civil liberties.

Dissenting report says ‘nothing to see here’

In a dissenting report, the Coalition members of the committee praise the Morrison government’s response to the pandemic, saying that it “successfully suppressed the virus with a strategy of closing international borders, quarantining returning travellers, building health system capacity, social distancing and sensible restrictions...”. <https://tinyurl.com/trwx894u>

Precisely! Those are the strategies to be examined: were there better ways do handle things?

How about we review those “sensible restrictions”...but no, neither side of politics wants to put the people first, which was what CLA’s submissions to a Covid inquiry did, calling for a review of emergency legislation and passing of a human rights act to give people greater protection or recourse to remedies if similar bureaucratic abuse – without basically any individual review rights – occurs in future.

Both COVID inquiries focused on government mechanisms. Little attention was paid to important questions of how people were treated during the pandemic.

Health-based COVID probe focuses on future suffering

Yet another parliamentary committee inquiring into long COVID and repeated COVID infections wants a database as one of its key recommendations, and did at least suggest helping patients in future.

The report of the House of Representative’s Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport’s made nine unanimous recommendations for matters to address, including:

- A definition of long COVID for use in Australia
- Evidence-based living guidelines for long COVID, co-designed with patients with lived experience
- A nationally coordinated research program for long COVID and COVID-19
- The COVID-19 vaccination communication strategy
- Access to antiviral treatments for COVID-19
- Support for primary healthcare providers
- Indoor air quality and ventilation. <https://tinyurl.com/4vm2nkkj>

ODD SPOT No. 2: Both Labor and Coalition support a COVID Royal Commission

Parliament and its committees can sometimes get very confusing. For example, both the Coalition and Labor want a Royal Commission into COVID handling.

The first report above, from a Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, chaired by a Liberal Senator, has come down strongly FOR a Royal Commission.

The Senate Select Committee on COVID-19, chaired by a very senior Labor Minister, the Minister for Finance Senator Katy Gallagher, has also come down in favour of holding a Royal Commission.

So, what’s the problem Albo? Announce a Royal Commission into COVID this month (May), and include the human rights aspects as supported by the Terms of Reference drawn up under a Coalition-led Senate committee. CLA admires Paul Scarr’s commitment to the need for human rights-specific evaluation.

The ersatz Kruk committee is not likely to enjoy sufficient powers or resources to cover all bases, lacking the wide powers of a deep-pocketed RC.

Tasmania Police failing courts and the people

According to a leading barrister, a prosecutor acting for the State told the Tasmanian Supreme Court last month that 70 indictable files are held up – delayed, stopped, without sufficient human resources to process – in the police disclosure section.

The statement means police in Tasmania are a large reason timely justice is prevented.

Indictable offences are more serious offences: murder, rape, gross bodily harm (usually after a fierce assault), etc. In Tasmania they must be prosecuted in the Supreme Court, not in any lower court.

With 70 cases admittedly held up by the Crown, justice is severely delayed. “Justice delayed is justice denied” is a well-known statement in relation to laws, courts, prosecutors and police.

The Supreme Court was told by the Crown prosecutor that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has written to the relevant Assistant Commissioner of Tasmania Police seeking a solution to the problem.

“There is no clear plan to resolve this backlog,” a barrister publicly commented.

Another barrister said: “I have matters as far back as 2021 in which (TasPol) are still finalising their investigations. TasPol doesn’t focus enough energy and resourcing into disclosure and backlog is inevitable.”

Unscramble TasPol’s anti-society culture

Civil Liberties Australia has said for two decades that Tasmania Police are incompetent by a combination of inept examination of at least some major cases, suffering from tunnel vision in investigations, believing their “noses know” who is guilty of crime and investigating only according to that police myth, do not handle, examine and report on forensic evidence properly, are too intertwined with the State’s forensic scientists (FSST) and generally are the weakest link in the State’s system of justice.

The Crown itself has now added lack of proper resource allocation to TasPol’s sins.

At the very least, these actions should be taken now to improve policing in Tasmania:

- Separate line management of both the State’s forensic laboratory and scientists, and fire brigades and firefighters, from having the Police Commissioner running everything.
- Employ new police, from interstate and overseas, in senior ranks to show Tasmanian police how police services should operate.
- Make police obey the law, in how they do policing, investigating, and making timely and full disclosure to the courts, which is a clear but ignored responsibility.
- Unscramble the anti-society, them-and-us culture (frequently also anti-Indigenous and anti-women) which permeates all police forces in Australia.
- Publicly and independently review all widely alleged miscarriages of justice, injustices and wrongful convictions in Tasmania of the past two decades.

Did Sofronoff adhere to integrity standards?

The ACT Integrity Commission is examining the conduct of Walter Sofronoff KC, who led the board of inquiry into the handling of the Bruce Lehrmann trial involving Brittany Higgins.

The commission is investigating disclosures made by Mr Sofronoff to journalists during and after the inquiry, including leaking the report to journalists before it was handed to Chief Minister Andrew Barr and Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury.

ACT integrity commissioner Michael Adams KC said it was in the public interest to confirm Mr Sofronoff’s actions were being assessed, despite the commission’s general policy not to confirm whether an investigation was active unless there were exceptional circumstances.

“Given the extraordinary and ongoing public discourse about the conduct of the board of inquiry and the recent judgment in the Supreme Court in *Drumgold v Board of Inquiry and Ors* (No. 3), I have determined that it is in the public interest to disclose that the commission is assessing whether the issues call for investigation,” ACT integrity commissioner Michael Adams KC said.
<https://tinyurl.com/k376mkb7>

Adams has appointed an Acting Integrity Commissioner, Prof John McMillan (photo), to assess the issues. McMillan AO is a former Commonwealth Ombudsman, acting NSW Ombudsman and federal integrity commissioner, Australian Information Commissioner and a noted expert on administrative law and Constitutional issues.



Australian columnist Albrechtsen becomes the story

Evidence tendered during a judicial review revealed that prior to prematurely providing the final report to *The Australian* columnist (and lawyer) Janet Albrechtsen, Sofronoff had 273 behind the scenes communications with her, including 71 phone calls of which 51 were personally with Ms Albrechtsen totalling some 11 hours and 27 minutes in phone calls.

It was further revealed that Albrechtsen flew to Brisbane for a private lunch with Sofronoff. <https://tinyurl.com/ykdye4ju>

It has been publicly reported that the contact with Albrechtsen was in stark contrast with that afforded other media outlets during his inquiry.

Sofronoff is professional ‘inquirer’

Sofronoff (see above) was President of the Queensland Court of Appeal (2017–2022) and Solicitor-General of Queensland from 2005 to 2014.

He is an experienced – if not inveterate – “inquirer”. He did the Grantham Floods inquiry in 2015, inquired into Queensland’s parole system in 2016, and into Forensic DNA testing in Queensland in 2022.

After his long and detailed report into DNA testing was handed down in December 2022, a subsequent two-month inquiry under Commissioner Dr Annabelle Bennett SC was needed to review absolutely fundamental and questionable aspects of DNA handling in Queensland that Sofronoff’s advisers had not brought to public attention during his inquiry.

Yet another reason police evidence is not to be believed

Criminal convictions are in doubt – in Victoria, and possibly nationwide – after 45 or more police investigations involved officer-falsified surveillance and on-duty times.

Officers from Victoria Police’s covert operations division apparently ran a conspiracy to lodge false logs of times when they were working to surveil alleged criminals. The times – logged for alleged overtime worked – were then used as evidence in court.

In some cases, police were drinking in pubs many kilometres from where they were allegedly running surveillance on people and premises.

VicPol is running an internal corruption inquiry and has briefed the Office of Public Prosecutions. An audit, begun in late 2023, is trying to establish how many criminal trials were definitely and possibly rendered invalid if false surveillance time logs were used as evidence. – *The Age* report, 27 March 2024 (paywall).

CLA believes all police forces should undertake a similar internal investigation: if the ploy was used in one police force, knowledge of it would have spread quickly throughout Australia.

Was Pell persecuted by incompetence, or religious discrimination?

The above story provides a reminder of the performance by Vic Police, the Vic DPP and the state’s senior appeal judges in the case of Cardinal George Pell.

Pell was charged with historical sexual abuse, in 1990, of two altar boys in St Patrick’s Cathedral in Melbourne, and other separate charges in rural Ballarat in the 1970s.

After a jury failed to reach a unanimous verdict on the Melbourne charges, a retrial found Pell guilty. He was sentenced to six years jail, with a non-parole period of three years and eight months.

In August 2019, Victoria’s Court of Appeal upheld the prime conviction by a 2-1 margin, but allowed an appeal to the High Court of Australia.

In April 2020 – in a turnaround from hearing to decision of less than four weeks, extraordinarily short by its standards – the High Court unanimously allowed the appeal, quashed the conviction and ordered he be formally acquitted.

Pell had served 404 days in jail, most in solitary. The Vic DPP withdrew the Ballarat allegations.

Pell died on 10 January 2023 after a hip operation in Rome.

Why the High Court ruled in favour of Pell

In an article titled *‘Lessons from the Pell case – two years after the High Court decision’*, lawyer and Jesuit priest Frank Brennan analysed the behaviour of those in legal authority in Melbourne.

“This charge related to an alleged assault by Pell on (accuser) A in the crowded corridor outside the sacristies immediately after mass on 23 February 1997. Mr Reed, the lead police investigator, admitted

under cross examination no one conducted any investigation whatever in relation to this incident – none at all. (Appeal Court) Justices Maxwell and Ferguson were still convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the offence had occurred:

‘We would accept, of course, that the sight of Cardinal Pell at close quarters with a choirboy might well have attracted attention but we would assume — as did cross-examining counsel — that all of the others in the corridor were intent on completing the procession, and removing their ceremonial robes, as soon as possible. In that state of affairs, it seems to us to be quite possible that this brief encounter was not noticed.’

Wikipedia on Pell [20]



“Then comes the jurisprudential sentence of the century: ‘At all events, the evidence once again falls well short of establishing impossibility.’

“Proof beyond reasonable doubt has become that the defence must establish something is absolutely impossible,” Brennan (photo, at Sydney Institute) writes.

<https://tinyurl.com/5apz5dvj> The Sydney Institute, 8 March 2022: The Sydney Papers Online issue 56

ODD SPOT: Police work in mysterious ways

NSW Police briefed media outlets about the alleged involvement of a five-year-old in a break-and-enter and car theft in the north-west town of Bourke before officers had spoken to the alleged offenders or laid charges, Indigenous groups say. After the criticism, police media refused to officially confirm the ages of the alleged offenders despite two metropolitan news mastheads quoting separate officers referring to a five-year-old. <https://tinyurl.com/42hc7vxf> CLA says the police leakers, if any, must come from the same ghostly uniformed cohort who mysteriously enable media outlets to be on site, with crews and cameras, before a pre-dawn or midnight raid is made on the suburban homes of alleged miscreants. See *Police are becoming Orwell’s ‘Big Brother’* item, below.

State tries to build new stables after horses bolted

Queensland has passed a new law to establish:

- a statutory position of Director of Forensic Science Queensland (Director FS);
- supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland (Forensic Science Queensland); and
- the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council (FS Advisory Council).

The new forensic regime, costing about \$160m so far to set up and for the next few years, follows two public inquiries since June 2022 into disastrous failings in the state’s own forensics laboratory.

The immediate task facing Qld’s official forensics regime is having to re-test maybe 100,000 samples involved in 37,000 cases.

Commentators have said the entire Australian forensics system, across the nation, may be in doubt as to its verity and integrity, because certification is based on NATA accreditation, supposedly independent but perhaps not living up to its billing (see *CLArion* March 2024).

Other states potentially face same problems

Qualified chemist and lawyer, Barbara Etter APM, noted this quote in the explanatory memorandum to the new wide-ranging Qld forensics law:

“The organisational structures of forensic science services in other Australian jurisdictions are not established by legislation. If the Bill is passed, Queensland will become the first Australian jurisdiction with overarching legislation establishing a statutory office, to reinforce the important role of high quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensic services.”

CLA has been warning for years that forensic science in Australia is muddle-headed, lacks proper integrity safeguards at its very base, is too close to police and prosecutors, and depends on its high-blown reputation for overseas TV shows rather than actual quality service delivered in and to the courts of Australia.

And, of course, in some places the state runs the forensic science service that the state relies on to prosecute people for crimes. In Tasmania, TasPol’s Commissioner is also the departmental boss of the forensic unit for the state. So much for the public perception of independence!

Call to shut down Qld ‘disaster’ laboratory

Whistleblowing forensic scientist Kirsty Wright calls it “mind blowing” that profiles previously missed over 15 years had come to light in almost half the major crime cases that have undergone retesting so far.

Dr Kirsty Wright says the “mind boggling” results are evidence the lab is facing impossible demands, and has called on the state government to shut the lab. All further testing should go to overseas labs until Qld’s state forensic lab can be rebuilt.

The “completely broken” lab was simultaneously trying to fix itself, implement recommendations from two commissions of inquiry (COI), conduct a historical review of more than 40,000 major crime cases, retest samples and keep up with current case demands, according to a report by David Murray and Lidia Lynch in *The Australian*.

The two commissions of inquiry were launched in 2022 and 2023 as a result of Dr Wright’s revelations on the news outlet’s *Shandee’s Story* and *Shandee’s Legacy* podcasts, prompting the state to allocate \$200m to rebuild the lab.

Health Minister Shannon Fentiman revealed in parliament last month that 41,077 major crime cases were received by the lab between October 2007 and the end of April last year. “All of these cases have the potential to be impacted by the 2022 and 2023 COI recommendations, and so will be reviewed to determine whether their DNA evidence is affected,” Ms Fentiman said.

As of March 27 this year, Forensic Science Queensland had retested or reinterpreted samples from 440 cases. DNA profiles had been generated where no profile had previously been obtained in 193 of the cases, or almost 44 per cent.

A total of 4795 samples from the 440 cases were retested or reinterpreted, with DNA profiles that had previously been missed being found in 1084 of the samples.

FSQ chief executive Linzi Wilson-Wilde said in mid-2023 that she was confident clearing the backlog of samples would take “two to three years”.

At the current pace, reviewing and retesting affected samples could take decades, and would detract from the vital task of repairing the lab, Dr Wright said. – *The Australian* 19 Apr 2024 (paywall)

Pollies fight, leaving children without youth justice reform

In October 2023, Queensland’s only independent state MP, Sandy Bolton, became chair of a parliamentary committee seeking solutions on youth crime in the first example of such a committee being independently chaired in more than two decades.

Bolton said she hoped the committee would take “a collaborative and bipartisan approach” that would lead to “constructive solutions”. But last month the committee collapsed in the face of tribal Labor-Liberal/National fighting.

There had been 26 meetings, 13 public hearings and hundreds of submissions, but the youth justice reform select committee still could not agree on a final report..

Bolton told parliament her position as chair was “untenable” despite her attempts to work “patiently, impartially, respectfully and collaboratively” with both Liberal National party and Labor members.

Queensland’s human rights commissioner, Scott McDougall, said it was “disappointing” a “bipartisan, evidence-based approach” had been lost at the “expense” of the rights of children and the safety of the community.

The Queensland Council of Social Service chief executive, Aimee McVeigh, said “the last thing Queenslanders want to see right now is chest beating and political point scoring...we need politicians to do their job and produce long-term solutions for the sake of our children and for the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland communities.”

And so say all of us, nationally, for all Australian children and communities. Details: <https://tinyurl.com/2dehxu4p>

Review into ‘traumatic’ police events released

The Lawler government has released the review into police resources, which made 18 recommendations to improve the NT Police force, following a decade of “deeply traumatic organisational events” that led to multiple organisational failures.

Chief Minister Eva Lawler accepted 15 of 18 recommendations made by the report’s author and former NT Police Association president Vince Kelly, including recruiting more police officers and hiring more support staff to address the increasing demand on police services in the Territory.

All recommendations, if enacted, will cost \$570 million over five years, which Ms Lawler's office has confirmed the government would commit to in total. That figure would include the previously announced \$200 million over four years for 200 new officers, \$16 million over four years for the "Territory Safety Division" and \$25 million to hire more emergency service call centre employees and CCTV operators. The review into police resourcing was ordered in August 2023, by then-police minister Kate Worden following damning NTPA surveys that showed wide dissatisfaction within the police both with its leadership and the government.

NT to get more Indigenous police

NT Chief Minister Eva Lawler has promised 200 new police officers over the next four years.

It's unclear whether the promise is a government commitment, or a Labor election promise: the NT goes to the polls on 24 August 2024. Either way, the cost will be \$200m.

Former NT Police Association president Vince Kelly has reviewed police resources, handing his report to CM Lawler in late March. Officer retention in the NT has been a huge issue, with 400 officers leaving the force over three years.

Relatively newly-appointed Police Commissioner Michael Murphy acknowledged retention was "a challenge", but said record attrition rates were slowly decreasing and bringing in 50 new officers a year was manageable. Murphy said he was aiming to recruit 30% Indigenous officers.

Last May, the government increased its relocation incentive (from interstate or overseas) from \$800 to \$20,000 after finding it difficult to attract officers and recruits.

The government said last month there was a "current sworn officer target of 1642" for police, stating that the 200 additional officers would take the total to 1842 over four years. – from the *NT Independent* online news journal <https://tinyurl.com/235spwhx> (paywall); also *ABC News* <https://tinyurl.com/mpwzupvm>

Women prisoners get the dregs of the dregs

Attorney General Chansey Paech has announced \$57 million to repurpose an old prison in Darwin and an Alice Springs rehab facility to house female inmates.

The new decisions, which contradict his previous "jailing is failing" mantra, will also see male prisoners detained at the old Berrimah prison as an "interim measure". Berrimah adult male prison was formerly decommissioned on 28 November 2014.

The current Lawler Labor government first flagged the idea of using old Berrimah prison – currently housing the Don Dale youth detention centre – despite previously indicating it would be demolished.

The government said the current Don Dale facility at Berrimah will be used as a "training facility for male prisoners to alleviate current prisoner pressures".

AG Paech said the "Stringybark Centre" at the old Berrimah jail and the "Paperbark" facility in Alice Springs would be converted to women's prisons later this year, after the drug and alcohol facilities currently operating in the facilities are moved.

The Berrimah facility will hold 110 people and Alice Springs 30, he said. The \$57m to refurbish the facilities includes \$14m already spent on "improving the current Don Dale youth detention centre and the facility will be used for training and getting prisoners reintegrated and work ready", the government said.

AG Paech also said the Alice Springs correctional centre would be allocated an "extra \$34m for infrastructure upgrades" – but not air conditioning immediately – and another \$35.2m to hire new custodial staff, support staff and increase rehabilitation programs.

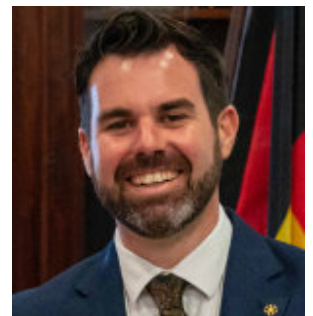
CLP Opposition Leader Lia Finocchiaro said the CLP, if elected, would "invest wisely in dealing with the demand for alcohol by having compulsory alcohol treatment", as well as introduce "sentenced to a skill" programs for youth and adult offenders, expand work camps in communities and boot camps for youth offenders. <https://tinyurl.com/3wnje7dn> – *NT Independent* (paywall).

Jailed kids riot, police claim

Fourteen young people face 79 charges after an alleged riot at Don Dale youth jail in Darwin last month.

The major disturbance saw a building set alight, a police officer injured and six detainees overnighting on a rooftop. Eight inmates surrendered to police, while six others finally came down from the roof after 9am the following morning.

Something allegedly thrown inflicted a leg injury on a policeman who was taken to hospital. – *NT Independent* (paywall).



WA Police definitely ‘people of interest’ in wrongful naming of murder suspect

A near 30-year wrong committed – but denied – by WA Police will be aired in public in early June.

Peter Weygers told CLA CEO Bill Rowlings he will appear in a program on SBS entitled 'Trial by Media', scheduled for 4 June 2024 at 8.30pm on an SBS program called INSIGHT.

Weygers was the Mayor of Claremont, Perth, whose name was almost certainly leaked to the media by WAPOL as a ‘person interest’ in the Claremont murders. Media were also tipped off to raids on his houses. He was also at the time the long-standing President of the Civil Liberties Association of WA.

WAPOL claims the media “named” Weygers, not them...but who told the media about him, and that he was being investigated, and where and when WAPOL was turning up to mount raids, CLA asks?

The naming shattered Weygers’ reputation forever, and still today older people in Perth, on mention of Weygers’ name, will instantly reply something like: “*Oh, wasn’t he connected with the Claremont killings?*”

Of course, the police naming also destroyed the credibility of the WA civil liberties movement. Civil Liberties Australia is in no doubt that outcome was a definite aim of WAPOL detectives.

Corruption and abuse of power by police and the Office of the DPP were rife at the time – see the Mallard case: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Mallard. Two very senior police resigned, and a prosecutor who left the Office of the DPP with \$380,000 in salary and entitlements, ended up paying the maximum fine that could be imposed under antiquated Legal Practice Board rules ...just a \$10,000 fine.

Weygers was effectively ‘parked’ in his position as a psychologist with the WA Dept of Education. (He was accused internally of nefarious misbehaviour which was never spelt out).

Still, to this day, he goes to work every morning and sits in a back room of the Education Department, with bugged all work to do other than to read administrative papers. He won’t resign, because he wants a full superannuation payout when he chooses to retire. Still, to this day, he has not received an apology from police, or any compensation for what WAPOL did to him and his family.

This ABC story provides an excellent rundown of the Claremont shenanigans: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-17/claremont-serial-killer-trial-the-wrong-suspects/11147118>

PS: Weygers, the former mayor, said last month that Claremont has installed a massive, state-of-the-art, CCTV system: the current Mayor is now complaining that Claremont at night has become like Alice Springs, and the expensive CCTV system doesn’t help in stopping crime or in catching the worst criminals.

Rights of the rights-less being ignored

Authorities have refused to endorse the actions needed after the Australian Human Rights Commission conducted inspections, interviews, and consultations in 2023 to monitor the human rights of people detained at the Yongah Hill immigration jail in Northam, 100km north-east of Perth.

The AHRC regularly monitors such detention centres to ensure that Australia’s immigration detention system complies with our obligations under international human rights law.

The AHRC’s report contains an overview of the key observations and concerns arising from the inspection, provides an assessment of the human rights impacts, and makes 33 recommendations to the Department of Home Affairs.

In its official response to the report, Home Affairs has agreed or partially agreed with 20 of the recommendations, disagreed with seven, with the remaining six requiring more government consideration.

Many of the recommendations are longstanding and are echoed by other oversight bodies, including the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Key recommendations in the report address the following concerns:

- Replacing the current system of mandatory immigration detention with closed detention to be used only as a last resort (Recommendation 1)
- Infrastructure concerns with the centre (Recommendations 2 and 3)
- Drug infiltration (Recommendations 4 to 7)
- Meaningful activity (Recommendation 8)
- Health services, including emergency and out of hours care, and mental health services (Recommendations 9 to 25)
- Response to COVID-19 (Recommendation 26)
- Treatment of people in detention, including general security, relationships with staff and use of force (Recommendations 26 to 33).

BRIEFS

Pain relief withheld from kids

During the Cleveland Dodd inquest last month, a nurse revealed detainees were denied medication if they exhibited violent behaviour. The 16-year-old Indigenous boy was discovered unresponsive in his cell in Unit 18 of Perth's Casuarina Prison on 12 October 2023. He was pronounced dead days later in hospital, becoming the first child to die in detention in WA. The inquest into his death has heard that leading up to him self-harming, Cleveland expressed intentions of self-harm eight times, requested medical attention and asked for water. His last hours in the prison were notable for the lack of care he received, CLA believes. – *National Indigenous Times* <https://tinyurl.com/2ctymus7>

State 'steals' two babies a week

SA's Department for Child Protection removed 105 babies aged under one month, and mostly under one week old, in the past financial year, a state public service whistleblower has revealed. She could no longer stay silent about what she described as "inhumane" practices in public hospitals, according to an ABC News report. "We don't treat them [the mothers] like human beings," the public servant said. About a third of the mothers are Aboriginal. A review of SA Health policy is due by the end of the year. <https://tinyurl.com/5e2d3urh>

LETTERS

'Camel tells a sad High Court story'

The Tang Camel story (*CLArion* April 2024) is very telling about High Court of Australia judges. The Chief Justice's recent whingeing about criticism of the courts and politics takes him way out of his depth. Non-contemptuous criticism of courts is very important to the polity.

Former Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen, noted this years ago in his paper *On Contempt*. He quoted a famous case that said: "The path of criticism is a public way: and the fact that fools may err therein is no ground for denying the public the right to criticise wrong or retrograde decisions by judges."

It seems to me that judges are getting very touchy about their standing, which is often most undermined by silly or poor judicial decisions! – name withheld, Australian lawyer.

CLA highlights for April 2024

Civil Liberties Australia met with the recently appointed new member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, Alicia Payne, MHR for the seat of Canberra.

Photo shows MP Alicia Payne, CLA CEO Bill Rowlings, CLA National Human Rights Campaign Manager Chris Stamford, and recently retired ACT Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Helen Watchirs.



CLA was able to bring MP Payne up to speed on the history of the PJHR inquiry into a possible new and better "framework" for human rights in parliament and throughout Australia. It has been sitting for a year.

Dr Watchirs volunteered to help CLA with her expert knowledge of how HR operates in ACT, where she led and ran the first Australian jurisdiction with a HR ACT, which began exactly 20 years ago next month. She was also still in office in late 2023 when the ACT introduced the No Rights Without Remedy (NRWR) principle, which will mean that anyone who believes their rights under ACT law have been breached will be able to seek conciliation and, later on, if that fails will be able to take a case for decision to the "small claims" tribunal, the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

HR Commissions in Victoria and Queensland may adopt a similar system when they review their HR laws over the next two years. The NRWR approach is one proposed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in its Free + Equal paper, released last year.

Queensland: Also in April, CLA met in Canberra with Peter Russo, the Member for Toohey in Queensland, who was one of the main promoters of a Human Rights Act for Queensland, which began operating in 2020. Discussions with him centred on how the NRWR principle might be incorporated into the updated Qld HRA expected to result from a formal review currently under way.

Rebutting nonsensical claims: CLA President Dr Kristine Klugman wrote a rebuttal to a piece of propaganda published in *Quadrant*, the journal of Australia's Right. 'Entrenching racism as a human right', was written by former academics Augusto Zimmermann and Gabriël Moens, seemingly as part of a growing movement arguing against whatever recommendations the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights will hand down in late-May after a 14-month inquiry into the human rights framework in Australia. The WA academics appear to have no lived experience, and lack detailed knowledge of, the 42 years' experience of Australians in the ACT (2004), Victoria (2006) and Queensland (2020) who have had HR Acts in their jurisdictions for nearly half a century in total. In particular, they fail to appreciate the "dialogue" model of human rights, as recommended for Australia by a four-year-long inquiry by the Australian Human Rights Commission, avoids the outdated and ignorant criticism of "unelected judges" interpreting laws by clearly retaining for parliaments the power to intervene and to resolve the issue by vote or further legislation should any conflicts be identified. The rebuttal article, sent to *Quadrant* and elsewhere, can be found on the CLA website: www.cla.asn.au

As volunteers age, activist groups wind up

The ACT-based group, Family and Friends of Drug Law Reform, wound up operations at a formal general meeting in April. CLA's President Dr Kristine Klugman and CEO Bill Rowlings attended, as long-time members, to congratulate them on how much they had achieved over about 25 years operating in the national capital. Without them, the ACT would probably have not had the nation's first injecting room, or pill testing at youth music events, or the most sensible approach to cannabis regulation in Australia.

The fate of FFDLR is likely to be repeated across many groups formed in the 1990s and early 2000s, as they chalk up two decades-plus of usually the same small band of volunteers, sometimes just a couple of people, enter their 70s or 80s and become plain exhausted. There is much less volunteering among the generations that followed such people, and support and activist groups nationwide are struggling to attract active members who will take on the months and years of plain hard work often associated with infrequent but important victories on behalf of citizens.

NT:

Members of CLA's HR campaign team met by Zoom with NT HRA Group members during April to help develop strategies to promote a territory HR Act in the lead-up to the NT election on 24 August 2024.

WA:

A new organisation, *Miscarriage of Justice Support Network*, has been set up to collate instances of wrongful convictions in the West. The website is at: <https://miscarriageofjusticewa.com/>

CLA's WA leader Margaret Howkins took to the steps of Parliament House last month, along with others from a wide cross-sections of organisations, to protest at the anti-fair go laws around renting introduced by the state Labor government.

Speakers condemned the fact that WA was the only state in Australia where landlords can evict tenants without a good reason.

Her poster read: '*Homelessness is state violence*'.

– Emma Kirk report, *NCA NewsWire* <https://tinyurl.com/mw379nse>



crisis hitting families© Provided by NCA NewsWire

TASMANIA:

CLA endorses the call of a Member of the Legislative Council for closer examination of why Tasmanian children were not safeguarded by arms of the state.

The report by long-retired state auditor Mike Blake into the conduct of senior Tasmanian public servants should be withdrawn because it was based on staggeringly deficient evidence, independent MLC for Nelson Meg Webb said last month.

Her anger is directed at the failure by the government to address major structural problems which came to light during the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the Tasmanian Governments Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

Blake found no failures by government bodies and officials he inquired into.

But, as MLC Webb points out, he didn't have access to COI transcripts, didn't consider public servants potentially involved in misconduct, did not know of a critical earlier report and could not access the head of the state public service.

She demanded Blake's report be withdrawn. "I am stunned and gravely concerned over the number and range of serious and outstanding questions left unresolved."

The government has accepted all Blake's findings and is considering his recommendations. – report based on David Killick article, *The Mercury*, 18 April 2024.

Fallout continues

Ramifications from the Child Sexual Abuse COI will continue to grip the island state for years to come. For example, the Eden Westbrook case has attracted a worldwide podcast audience in the millions, and it sits on the periphery of the inquiry.

The senior TasPol police officer who oversaw the inquiry into the teenage Eden's death by hanging, deemed a suicide at the time, was Paul Reynolds. He died by suicide aged 54 in September 2018.

INTERNATIONAL

Bail freedom becomes licence to kill

At least 21 men were left free to kill women after being released on bail over a recent three-year period in the UK. Campaigners say "the system isn't fit for purpose".

Data from the Femicide Census showed the horrifying death toll for UK women whose killers were released on bail between 2020 and 2022. At least six of those men had been arrested on suspicion of offences against women before going on to kill their accusers, according to *The Independent*.

A further 14 killers attacked their female victims while released from prison on licence in the same period.

Meanwhile, 16 men were subject to injunctions such as domestic violence prevention orders when they killed – sparking debate over the effectiveness of enforcement. <https://tinyurl.com/2y2mpes5>

Watson gets new chance to prove innocence

Scott Watson has spent about 26 years in jail in NZ, wrongly convicted of murder, he insists.

A new appeal will be heard in Wellington over five days from 10 June 2024.

Watson was convicted of murdering Olivia Hope, 17, and Ben Smart, 21, who disappeared in Marlborough Sounds in the early hours of New Years Day 1998 after attending an onshore yachties party.

The witness ID evidence was dodgy, and later recanted. The forensic evidence around two hairs was doubtful back then, and is probably more so today with greater knowledge of hair analysis.

But so far, time after time, in appeals and requests for parole, Watson has been kept in jail by a NZ police, forensics, court and legal system over which – like in Australia – a more than reasonable doubt often lingers.

Stay tuned for a report some months from now of Watson's fate this time around in court. <https://tinyurl.com/4258rvsx>

AI helping to cut homelessness

Los Angeles County is using AI technology to predict people most likely to lose their housing, then stepping in to help with rent, utility bills, car payments and more to prevent the loss.

The program has served 700-plus people since 2021, and 86% have retained their housing at a time when more than 180,000 Californians have no place to call home, Marisa Kendall reported.

LA County's algorithm analyses data from residents' emergency room visits, jail stays, use of food assistance and more. Among the 10,000 people the algorithm deemed to be highest risk, 24% became homeless.

Is a computer really better at guessing who will become homeless than human social workers trained in this work? Yes, apparently – 3.5 times better, to be exact. <https://tinyurl.com/4n8yeka4>

'Deepfakes' to bring fines, jail

Creating a sexually explicit "deepfake" image will be an offence under new UK legislation.

Anyone who creates a sexually explicit deepfake without consent will face a criminal record, an unlimited fine and possibly jail as well if the image is shared.

Minister for Victims and Safeguarding, Laura Farris (photo), said creating deepfake sexual images is “unacceptable irrespective of whether the image is shared. It is another example of ways in which certain people seek to degrade and dehumanise others, especially women,” she said.



The new offence will be introduced through an amendment to the controversial Criminal Justice Bill, which is making its way through Parliament. <https://tinyurl.com/373cwyc7>

Police are becoming Orwell’s ‘Big Brother’

“Police surveillance today looks much different than it did 10, five, or even three years ago.

“A report from the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence, declassified last year, put it succinctly: *‘The government would never have been permitted to compel billions of people to carry location tracking devices on their persons at all times, to log and track most of their social interactions, or to keep flawless records of all their reading habits.’*

“That report called specific attention to the ‘data broker loophole’: law enforcement’s practice of obtaining data for which they’d otherwise have to obtain a warrant by buying it from brokers.” – *NY Focus* <https://tinyurl.com/2jartywm>

Would you want to be Google-eyed?

The Indian legal system is puzzling over whether it is right and proper – or a gross abuse of privacy – to order that a person to whom a court grants bail must report his Google Maps pin location to authorities daily throughout the bail period.

The Google pin is a location confirmation device on Google Maps, usually in the form of a red ‘droplet’ with the pointy bit showing precisely where the facility (or person) is located.

Under *‘Big Brother Watching You’*, Prof Upendra Baxi, writing in *‘India Legal Live’* on 11 April 2024, quotes noted Australian privacy guru, long-time chair and stalwart of the Australian Privacy Foundation (and also CLA member) Prof Roger Clarke’s 2009 paper titled *‘Privacy Impact Assessment: Its Origin and Growth’*, *Computer Law & Security Review*, 25: 2, pp. 123-135.(2009).

<https://www.indialegallive.com/magazine/bail-condition-google-pin-investigating-officer-privacy-violation/>

Dark days for shopping in private

NZ’s Privacy Commissioner is asking citizens to help draft a biometric code of practice, as the nation does not have special rules for biometrics.

The drafting has become more urgent after a Rotorua supermarket trialling facial recognition technology mistakenly identified a Māori woman as a thief.

She was shopping at New World store – one of 25 Foodstuffs’ North Island supermarkets trialling the technology – when she was approached by two staff members and asked to leave the store. But it turned out to be a case of mistaken identity, highlighting the fact that dark-skinned faces are notoriously harder to ID than white ones, on whom most trials have been conducted.

The technology scans customers’ faces and compares images to those on the store’s databases of known offenders or suspects.

The biometric code of practice will cover fingerprints, facial, voice, irises, palms and hand technology, keystroke patterns and the way someone walks. <https://tinyurl.com/2s3y3pvt>

Protecting a person’s brainwaves

Governor Jared Polis of the US state of Colorado has signed into law the first US measure to protect the data found in a person’s brainwaves.

Sponsors of the bill said it was necessary as quick advances in neurotechnology make scanning, analysing and selling mental data increasingly more possible and profitable.

State representative Cathy Kipp, a sponsor of the legislation, said in a statement that while advancements in the neurotechnology field hold great promise for improving the lives of many people, “we must provide a clear framework to protect personal data from being used without their consent while still allowing these new technologies to develop.”

Online journal *it news* reported that: “Big tech firms – including Facebook and Instagram’s parent company Meta Platforms, along with Elon Musk’s Neuralink – are developing technology that can detect brain activity then potentially put it to commercial use.” <https://tinyurl.com/mr4xdcey>

Friends with an absence of benefits

American civil liberties people are up in arms because a new law allows their National Security Agency to 'hoover' up vast troves of communications and data worldwide.

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act allows the NSA, without a warrant, to collect from Google and other major tech companies everything involved in Americans talking, e-mailing, or texting with non-Americans outside the country.

The theory is the NSA is permitted to gather foreign intelligence, but in practice they also capture and store endless data on American citizens, which is what agitates US human rights bodies.

But Civil Liberties Australia's contention is that the USA has no right whatsoever to capture the communications of "foreign" nationals in the first place. Who voted for America to rule the world? Imagine if China was claiming a similar hegemony, there'd be hasty condemnation from Australian MPs.

The principle is the same as the USA trying to extradite and then lock up for decades Julian Assange, a "foreign" (but in reality Australian) journalist who exposed official US military murder, human rights abuses and assorted other crimes.

Who gave the USA the right to prosecute Assange? Nobody.

He was not and is not an American citizen. He owes the USA no allegiance. He is not obliged to obey their laws unless he is on American territory, which he has never been for all current legal argument.

The USA has no god-given, nor world electorate-decided mandate to prosecute anyone it likes. Or to run communications and data surveillance – to "wiretap" as the Americans say – private conversations.

With "friends" like the USA, a nation needs no enemies. <https://tinyurl.com/4zbt44jc>

Elon is muddled headed, and a serial banner

Wikipedia reports that the X-man, Elon Musk's, flight usage was tracked on social media through ElonJet, a website run by a climate change activist. That is, until X-man censored the coverage.

The Twitter version of the account was blocked in December 2022, after Musk said that his son X AE A-XII (yes, that's his son's name) had been harassed by a stalker after the account posted the airport at which his jet had landed. This led to Musk banning the ElonJet account on Twitter, as well as the accounts of journalists that posted stories regarding the incident (the journos' accounts were later reinstated).

In 2022, Musk wrote an article for *China Cyberspace*, the official publication of Cyberspace Administration of China, which enforces Internet censorship in China. His writing the article was described as muddle-headed, as it conflicted with his advocacy for free speech.

In September 2020, Musk stated that he would not get the COVID-19 vaccine, because he and his children were "not at risk for COVID". Two months later, Musk contracted COVID-19. In December 2021, Musk said that he and his eligible children had received the vaccine, saying that the science behind the COVID vaccines was "unequivocal". – Wikipedia: Elon Musk

...but a very rich one

Tesla last month asked its shareholders to again approve CEO Elon Musk's record-breaking \$56bn (yes, billion is correct – that's about \$86 billion in Australian dollars) pay that was set in 2018. Kathaleen McCormick of Delaware's court of chancery rejected the payout, saying the compensation granted by the board was "an unfathomable sum" that was unfair to shareholders.

The compensation includes no salary or cash bonus, but sets rewards based on Tesla's market value rising to \$US650bn over the next 10 years. Tesla is valued at about \$US500bn. <https://tinyurl.com/mrh9b23f>

In the same month, X-man sacked 14,000 Tesla workers, about 1/10th of all employees, to make the carmaker 'lean and hungry'. Probably made the workers and their kids lean and hungry too, CLA believes.

ODD SPOT: BC to seek compensation if media posts cost the state

The Canadian province of British Columbia's government is introducing new legislation to recover health-related costs from alleged wrongdoers, including social media companies.

Attorney General Niki Sharma said the law would allow courts to order recovery of health-related costs associated with the promotion and distribution of products that are harmful. BC has already won cases against tobacco and opioid companies.

She said, if passed, the legislation will allow the government to seek to claim public costs, including hospital treatments and medical appointments, and the costs of preventive measures to address the risk of disease, illness or injury.



The legislation will provide the opportunity for the government to take social media companies to court for harms caused people, especially children, she said. Sharma (photo) said the legislation also permits the government to hold companies, their directors and officers liable. <https://tinyurl.com/252rwaj4>

It will be interesting to see if the Sharma law allows companies like X to be sued for the consequences of “copycat” killings allowed to sit on their sites, CLA says. <https://tinyurl.com/252rwaj4>

Health suffering as rights decline

A years-long evaluation by a global medical consortium has issued a stark warning that human rights are going backwards internationally, which has potentially major ramifications for human health.

The Lancet journal says in its 21 March 2024 issue that a commitment to human rights has motivated workers and administrators to demand access to affordable, quality, and respectful health services for all, especially the most marginalised, and to strive towards gender equality, social justice, and basic minimum standards of living commensurate with human dignity.

“(But), 75 years after the UN’s historic ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the global commitment to protect the fundamental human rights of all people is under grave threat”, *The Lancet* says in releasing the report of a Commission of Health and Human Rights run by the International AIDS Society and the journal.

“(The report) explores the alarming deterioration of human rights over the past two decades globally and the serious implications of this trend for human health, particularly the health of the most vulnerable.

“The report examines the social, political, and environmental factors that are undermining the centrality of human rights and human dignity and develops recommendations to reverse the recent backtracking from this commitment.” <https://tinyurl.com/nhdn94sr> (paywall).

Public order powers to prevent “disruptive” protests in force

New Serious Disruption Prevention Orders in the UK, it is claimed by government, will prevent individuals from repeatedly causing serious disruption at protests.

Civil liberties organisation Liberty described the legislation as “a shameless attempt” by the UK government to reduce the right to protest.

The new orders can impose a range of restraints including preventing people from being in a particular place or area, participating in disruptive activities and being with protest groups at given times. They can also stop individuals from using the internet to encourage protest-related offences.

These orders can be imposed on those who have, on at least two occasions, committed protest-related offences, for example locking-on, or breached the conditions of an injunction.

Serious Disruption Prevention Orders were introduced as part of the Public Order Act 2023, which was passed last year, and breaching an order will be a criminal offence that will carry a maximum penalty of six months in prison and/or an unlimited fine. <https://tinyurl.com/dpah2skv>

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

Lost your voice?

The maker of ChatGPT – OpenAI – is promoting new technology that can clone a person’s voice. It unveiled its new Voice Engine technology in late March, just a few days after filing a trademark application for the name. The company claims it can recreate a person’s voice with just 15 seconds of recording of the person talking, but says it will not yet release the product publicly “due to safety concerns”. <https://tinyurl.com/mr4mzxvc>

Slavery continues to be a modern problem

Calls to a UK anti-slavery helpline reached a record high last year, with the number of potential victims in the care sector rising by almost a third and the first suspected cases of forced surrogacy reported. There were 11,700 contacts to the modern slavery and exploitation helpline in 2023, up almost a fifth from 9779 contacts in 2022. Anti-slavery charity Unseen released UK-wide data showing that contacts to its helpline through calls, on its web form or through its app have risen “significantly” for the fourth year in a row. <https://tinyurl.com/43yvchuf>

Rwanda is now formally the UK’s Nauru

The UK government’s send-refugees-to-Rwanda bill will become law but it remains a ‘defective, constitutionally improper piece of legislation’, the Law Society has warned. Prime minister Rishi Sunak said

passing of the 'landmark' legislation was 'not just a step forward but a fundamental change in the global equation on migration'. However, UK Law Society vice-president Richard Atkinson said the bill was a backward step for the rule of law and the UK's constitutional balance. <https://tinyurl.com/3p5hvsa5>

Tipping the balance for poorly paid

The UK government's Tipping Act will likely benefit more than two million workers, giving them a fair share of tips received by their employer. Workers will be able to view an employer's tipping policy, their tipping records and will be able to use the Tipping Code as evidence in an employment tribunal. Millions of UK workers are set to take home an estimated \$380 million more of their hard-earned cash. The measures, which apply to all industries are expected to come into force on 1st October 2024, once they have been approved by Parliament. Tips cannot count towards minimum wage pay – this has been the case since 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/ycx3bfwx>

'Secret; hearings on the up

Secret magistrate hearings have hit record numbers in England and Wales. SJP (officially, Single Justice Procedure) lets magistrates hear alleged offences not liable for jail time in private, rather than in open court. Offences include using a television without a licence, dodging train fares, driving without car insurance, speeding and truancy. Defendants can choose to attend their hearing in person. In 2023, magistrates determined 787,403 "secret" cases, up from a previous peak of 784,325 in 2019. Justice Secretary Alex Chalk says the system needs reform after hearing numerous concerns from magistrates. <https://tinyurl.com/ssh7p6zb>

ODD SPOT: Should whales have 'legal personhood'?

A Māori conservationist, Mere Takoko, has explained in an article why there's a campaign to recognise whales as legal persons and ocean ambassadors to the United Nations. <https://tinyurl.com/ycz65vnt> In 2017, New Zealand granted legal personhood to the Whanganui River. In 2014, the Te Urewera park, the ancestral home of the Tuhoe people, became the first natural feature in NZ to be recognised as a legal person. In 2018, Mount Taranaki – a 120,000 year-old stratovolcano sacred to the Maori – was awarded the same status. <https://tinyurl.com/3xufvmuv>

'Digitally-dumb' oldies cut off from services

One in six people in the UK over 65yo don't use the internet at all, and 4.5m people can not complete the most fundamental tasks to use the internet successfully, according to the charity, Age UK. Their report, *Offline and Overlooked*, found that 4.7m over-65s can not complete the eight key tasks to using the internet: being able to turn on devices, enter login details, use settings and controls, open applications, connect to WiFi, open internet browsers, keep passwords secure, and change passwords when prompted. "Policy makers should stop fantasising about a digital-only world, come back down to earth and make sure older people can continue to access the services to which they are entitled," Age UK says. <https://tinyurl.com/26mpfp3p>

DATES

10 May, Melbourne: 'Science and Medicine in the Courts: Learnings from the Wrongful Conviction of Kathleen Folbigg', 12.45 - 6.00pm, Owen Dixon Chambers East, Level 5, 205 William Street. Details: Vic chapter, Aust, Academy of Forensic Sciences: aafs.vicchapter@gmail.com

May 2024, NSW and Van Diemen's Land: Bicentenary of the Supreme Courts (Note: VDL then = Tasmania now).

15-17 May, Belfast & Dublin: World Bar conference. Topics include: Cancel Culture, Free Speech and the Right to Offend; Law in the Era of Climate Crisis; Rule of Law Under Fire; AI Unleashed. Details: <http://www.worldbar2024.com>
Hosts: Jointly, Bar of Northern Ireland, Bar of Ireland.

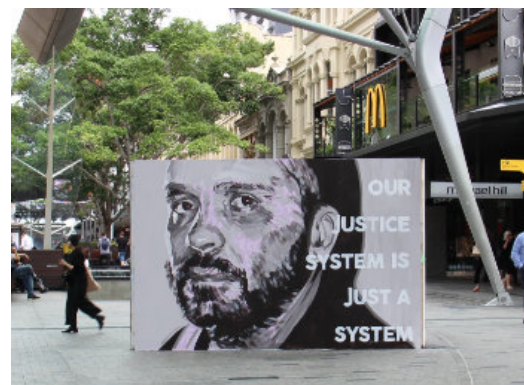
4 June, National: 8.30pm on SBS, 'Trial By Media', The story of Peter Weygers, in the late-1990s Mayor of Claremont WA and President of the WA civil liberties body, and how his personal, work and private-public reputation was shattered – never to recover, even to today – when he was wrongly and probably maliciously named by WA Police as a 'person of interest' in the Claremont Murders.

6-7 June, Sydney: Free + Equal Human Rights Conference, Australian Human Rights Commission, including *Rights On Time* panel on evening of 6 June. Hyatt Regency. Details: <https://www.freeandequal.com.au/>

24 July, Brisbane: Supreme Court Library Qld webinar: 'Human rights and law making', second webinar in the 2024 Democracy in action webinar series. Created for teachers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of our democratic system of government. More info: <http://www.sclqld.org.au/>

29-31 July, Darwin: Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference (APSACC). Workshops (29 July) and conference (30 and 31 July) hosted by the NT ICAC Commissioner. Info: info@apsacc.com.au

22 Aug – 15 Sept, Hobart: *'Denied'*, exhibition of Sky Parra's portrait series on Wrongful Convictions, Salamanca Art Centre, 67 Salamanca Place. The artist has painted Scott Austic, Derek Bromley (see photo right, in Queen St Mall Brisbane in 2022), Frank Button, Henry Keogh, Andrew Mallard and Lloyd Rayney, among others, with a new portrait likely to be unveiled for the first time in Hobart. Details: <https://www.skyparra.com/>



Election cycle for Australia:

2024: **Northern Territory:** 24 August 2024

ACT: 19 October 2024

Queensland: 26 October 2024

2025: **WA:** 8 March 2025

Federal: March 2025 likely

(Earliest possible is 3 August 2024 and latest possible Saturday 17 May 2025)

2026 **South Australia:** 21 March 2026

Victoria: 28 November 2026

2027: **NSW:** 27 March 2027

2028: **Tasmania:** likely date is 27 May 2028

CLArion is the regular e-newsletter of Civil Liberties Australia Box 3080 Weston Creek ACT 2611 Australia. Responsibility for election comment in *CLArion* is taken by CLA's Public Officer, Bill Rowlings, of Fisher, ACT. Please feel free to report or pass on items in *CLArion*, crediting CLA and/or any other originating source. We welcome contributions for the next issue: please send to: [Secretary\(at\)cla.asn.au](mailto:Secretary(at)cla.asn.au) Closing date for this issue was 27 April 2024.

As we are not a law firm, and are not licensed to give legal advice, we do not deal with individual legal or similar quasi-legal cases: prisoners and others are advised we will not be responding to letters or emails asking for help with appeals, for legal advice, for recommendations of lawyers to write to, pro bono services to consult, or similar requests. We work to change laws rules and anomalies for the generic benefit of all Australians.

ENDS ENDS ENDS