

CLArion No. 608, 01 August 2006

- email newsletter of Civil Liberties Australia (ACT Assn. No. A04043).

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## Contents

|                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Inquiry, A-G meeting and preparing for sedition forum are highlights.....      | 1  |
| MPs asked to walk with children to calm Question Time .....                    | 2  |
| Call for coroner to inquire into Clea Rose hit-run death.....                  | 2  |
| Law school forum examines twists and turns of DNA.....                         | 2  |
| Roxon supports CLA's call for more federal action against death penalty .....  | 3  |
| Are today's Canberra lawyers too scared of government to speak out? .....      | 3  |
| New raft of beefed-up security Bills go before Parliament.....                 | 3  |
| Australia-China dialogue discusses human rights, labour standards.....         | 4  |
| 250 celebrate 100th anniversary of Australian CL founder's birth .....         | 4  |
| Same-sex inquiry gets under way.....                                           | 4  |
| Chinese lawyers to study in Australia .....                                    | 5  |
| Eight bullets in the head is an OH&S issue for London police.....              | 5  |
| UK to permit data 'fishing expeditions' to identify suspects .....             | 5  |
| CIA kidnapped citizens, airlifted them to torture regimes, says EU .....       | 6  |
| Jordan helps the US engage in torture, says Amnesty .....                      | 6  |
| Police want more power to eavesdrop on computer traffic.....                   | 6  |
| Briton on Pakistan's death row gets last-minute stay .....                     | 7  |
| The cost of Executive arrogance .....                                          | 7  |
| Two cases call into question Thai civil liberties and justice systems .....    | 7  |
| Beijing proposes law to curb journalists reporting on 'disasters' .....        | 8  |
| Chinese threaten crackdown on internet, mobile phones.....                     | 8  |
| Dutch court OKs pedophile party contesting general election.....               | 8  |
| Missouri can't find a doctor who'll execute .....                              | 8  |
| ACLU unties gag on its board members.....                                      | 8  |
| Irish to introduce new privacy, press and defamation laws .....                | 9  |
| UK school plans to fingerprint students and scan to record attendance .....    | 9  |
| Sudanese Government accused of using laws to harass rights workers.....        | 9  |
| New 'get tough' justice package for England: more jails, longer sentences..... | 10 |
| Vote 1 for the main chance .....                                               | 10 |
| Book reviewers wanted.....                                                     | 10 |
| <i>WHAT'S DOING</i> .....                                                      | 10 |
| THE LAST WORD: details from the New York Times, 14 July 2006.....              | 11 |

## **Inquiry, A-G meeting and preparing for sedition forum are highlights**

CLA appears before a federal parliamentary inquiry into civics education in August, as well as working to extend the death penalty campaign nationally and internationally.

On David Hicks, CLA is writing to local government councils throughout Australia to seek their help. We're asking them to write to the Australian Government requesting that the Guantanamo Bay detainee is tried before Christmas, or brought home in January before the start of his sixth year in captivity without conviction.

The letter campaign is being supported by

Other highlights for August include:

- meeting ACT Attorney-General Simon Corbell to discuss the DNA data regimes in the ACT, as well as national double jeopardy, censorship and recalcitrant prisoner legislation.
- meeting with the new head of the Aboriginal Legal Service, Bill Bashford;

- writing radio scripts for four segments on Radio Ramadan, the Muslim community radio station operating in the ACT region during the holy month of Ramadan (24 September to 23 October);
- finalising the Sedition Forum (Thursday 14 September, 6pm, National Library of Australia) with keynote speakers, former Media Watch presenter David Marr and Law Professor Simon Bronitt.
- Preparing to review the annual reports of key federal and ACT government departments (volunteers sought to read and analyse the report of one department – <mailto:secretary@claact.org.au> if you can help).

**THE LAST WORD:** Mobile phones for school kids – are they a parent’s right? See story at end of this bulletin.

~~~~~[Top of the Document](#)

MPs asked to walk with children to calm Question Time

CLA will give oral evidence to a federal parliamentary inquiry into civics education this month. President Dr Kristine Klugman, CEO Bill Rowlings and member John Harvey will appear before the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters – Civics and Education on Friday 11 August at 9.45am.

The oral hearing is to follow up on innovative suggestions made by CLA in its formal submission, lodged earlier.

CLA has proposed that:

- MPs file into question time each day hand-in-hand with children as a calming measure;
- young people get a chance each year to take part in a live ‘parliament’ making a real decision on an issue affecting their lives; and
- voting principles and counting methods (including the Hare-Clark electoral system) be taught in schools nationwide in social studies/history classes and maths.

Read the CLA submission at: <http://www.claact.org.au/pages/subs.html>

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### **Call for coroner to inquire into Clea Rose hit-run death**

CLA has called on the ACT Coroner to hold an inquest into the circumstances surrounding the road traffic death of Clea Rose at the hands of an under-age schoolbody one year ago.

Director Anthony Williamson said it was important that the coroner inquire into whether the Australian Federal Police (AFP) hot pursuit guidelines had been updated since the Rose death to try to prevent future similar tragedies.

CLA was also concerned because AFP Internal investigations were supposed to be conducted by the Professional Standards Unit but, in the Clea Rose matter, the Collision Investigation Unit conducted the investigation, he said.

~~~~~[Top of the Document](#)

Law school forum examines twists and turns of DNA

Experts, researchers, judicial officers and lawyers spent four hours analysing DNA Evidence: The CSI Effect before an audience of about 100 at the University of Canberra Law School on 28 July.

Opened by ACT Chief Justice Terry Higgins, the experts included chief magistrate Ron Cahill and Director of Public Prosecutions Richard Refshauge.

Did the TV show, CSI, influence jurors’ expectation of evidence in court was the prime question.

Views – based on research and experience – were varied.

One view was that the defence could be disadvantaged if DNA evidence that jurors expect from TV shows is not produced. Another expectation – that all evidence should match the highest DNA standards of proof of some DNA – may not be met in real-life situations.

The forum seemed to agree DNA should be used as one tool to find the truth. The principle of reasonable doubt should be retained and not replaced by a demand for DNA-delivered absolute certainty. Interpretation of the surrounding circumstance remains vital: DNA is only as good as its expert interpretation.

The summary view was that jurors should be supported, educated and given the information they need by the judge, the prosecution and expert witnesses, even by specialist briefings or pre-trial training sessions if necessary.

CLA will continue to explore issues of DNA holdings by CrimTrac and other databases, and the proposed national review of the double jeopardy principle.

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– from UNity, UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 14 July 2006

### **Roxon supports CLA's call for more federal action against death penalty**

Shadow Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon, has supported CLA's call for Australia to mount an international campaign, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, to abolish the death penalty.

CLA calls the campaign 10/10 for Life, seeking a 10-year moratorium on the death penalty to begin on 10/10/2010.

Australia should advocate more strongly for abolition of the death penalty to regional neighbours and allies, and encourage their ratification of the 2nd Optional Protocol (2OP), Ms Roxon said.

The 2OP to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) came into force under international law on 11 July 1991. Australia is one of only 57 countries to have signed and ratified the Protocol. However, Australia has not yet adopted 2OP provisions into domestic law.

According to Amnesty International, in 2005 at least 2,148 people were executed in 22 countries and at least 5,186 people were sentenced to death in 53 countries.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

Are today's Canberra lawyers too scared of government to speak out?

James Waghorne, finalising his PhD at the University of Melbourne on the history of civil liberties in Australia, says that the Melbourne-based 'Australian Council for Civil Liberties' spread across Australia after a fashion during the late-1930s, early 1940s.

"In most cases this meant that a prominent lawyer agreed to act as State secretary," Mr Waghorne says. "The secretary represented the Council in local cases and distributed literature."

The nominal NSW Secretary was Jack Sweeney, an eminent industrial relations barrister who became a judge. He was one of three founders of the NSW CCL in the early 1960s.

"In Queensland and Western Australia these offices grew into fully-fledged committees with their own affiliated societies," James writes. "These bodies collapsed towards the end of the second world war."

"It might amuse you to hear that, when it was discussed setting up an office to represent the Northern Territory, it was agreed that "no Canberra lawyer could risk anti-government activities!"

We wonder if that is still the case with some Canberra barristers and lawyers, 60 years later?

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– from UNity, UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 27 July 2006

### **New raft of beefed-up security Bills go before Parliament**

New Bills concerning phone and email tapping, ASIO, the Australian Federal Police and privacy will go before Federal Parliament when it sits from 8 to 17 August.

It is expected the government will use its Senate majority to rubber-stamp these Attorney-General portfolio Bills through without adequate debate:

- ASIO Legislation Amendment Bill 2006
- Law Enforcement (AFP Professional Standards and Related Measures) Bill 2006

- Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Bill 2006
- Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2006
- Privacy Legislation Amendment Bill 2006
- Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill 2004
- Surveillance Devices Bill 2004.
- Telecommunications (Interception) Amendment (Stored Communications) Bill 2004.

Bills under the Justice and Customs portfolio are:

- Crimes Act Amendment (Forensic Procedures) Bill (No. 1) 2006
- Customs Legislation Amendment (Border Compliance and Other Measures) Bill 2006
- Financial Transaction Reports Amendment Bill 2006.

Another important Bill, under the Special Minister of State portfolio, is the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Bill 2006.

The Bills can be accessed through the Commonwealth Parliament's website [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au) (click on Bills)

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from DFAT media release, 25 July 2006

Australia-China dialogue discusses human rights, labour standards

The 10th Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue round, on 25 July in Canberra, focused on labour rights and standards, according to a media release from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Australian delegation also raised issues such as freedom of the press, religious freedom, the treatment of political activists and Falun Gong practitioners, as well as the situations in Tibet and Xinjiang and individual cases of concern.

DFAT has released no details of the discussions.

Under the 2006-07 Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program, Australia will help promote human rights in China, especially in legal reform, women's and children's rights, and ethnic minority rights.

After a meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Downer, senior members of the Chinese delegation met with the ACT Human Rights Office, the Australian Compensation and Safety Council and representatives from non-governmental organisations.

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### **250 celebrate 100th anniversary of Australian CL founder's birth**

About 250 people – including five CLA members – attended the 100th anniversary celebrations in Melbourne on 8 July 2006 of the birth of the 'father' of Australian civil liberties, journalist and historian Brian Fitzpatrick.

CLA people present at the function at Melbourne University were Ann Moyal, Lesley Vick, Ken Davidson, CLA President Kristine Klugman and CEO/secretary Bill Rowlings.

Comedian Max Gillies was a pensive master of ceremonies, and speakers included Fitzpatrick's daughter (noted Soviet era historian Sheila Fitzpatrick), Melbourne historian Stuart Macintyre and Brian Fitzpatrick's biographer, Don Watson, of speechwriting and etymology fame.

The event also celebrated the 70th anniversary of Liberty Victoria, which stands as the legacy of Fitzpatrick's drive and is a descendant of the Council for Civil Liberties he helped to found. Liberty's President, Brian Walters, gave the closing address.

A meeting of Victorian, NSW and ACT civil liberties representatives, along with Terry O'Gorman, was held the morning after the dinner.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from UNity, UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 14 July 2006

Same-sex inquiry gets under way

The National Inquiry into Discrimination against People in Same-Sex Relationships: Financial and Work-Related Entitlements and Benefits is holding public meetings across Australia.

The Sydney hearing was in late-July, with future hearings in Perth 9 August, Adelaide 28 August, Hobart 25 September, Melbourne 27 September, Brisbane 11 October and Canberra 20 October.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) inquiry is auditing Commonwealth, State and Territory laws to identify where same-sex couples may be denied financial and work-related benefits and entitlements that heterosexual couples enjoy.

The inquiry is also collecting individual stories about the impact of laws on same-sex couples, and any children of same-sex couples.

More than 330 people/groups made submissions in response to a Discussion Paper released in April. Further information: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/samesex/submissions.html>

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### **Chinese lawyers to study in Australia**

China will send four lawyers to Australia to undertake a 23-week placement studying legal professional regulation and policy development.

The project is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Justice and All China Lawyers Association with the Australian Attorney-General's Department, Law Council of Australia and the International Legal Services Advisory Council (ILSAC).

The pilot program will be funded by AusAID under the China-Australia Governance Program (CAGP).

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from various UK reports

Eight bullets in the head is an OH&S issue for London police

No Metropolitan police officer will face criminal charges – murder or manslaughter – for shooting the Brazilian electrician, Jean Charles de Menezes, eight times on a underground train in London on 22 July 2005, two weeks after the London terror bombings.

Instead the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute London's Metropolitan Police under health and safety laws for killing an innocent man to whom they owed a duty of care.

The ludicrous, incomprehensible outcome brought immediate ridicule from even Establishment figures.

The Labour peer Lord Harris, a former chairman of the Metropolitan Police Authority, said the decision to prosecute under health and safety law was "a ridiculous cop-out, which will satisfy no one", according to a report in The Guardian newspaper.

The paper also reported that Scotland Yard said the shoot-to-kill policy for terror suspects would remain in place.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from a report by Alan Travis in The Guardian (UK), 18 July 2006

### **UK to permit data 'fishing expeditions' to identify suspects**

Proposed new British police powers will use prevention orders to curtail suspects and allow data mining against crime.

The serious crime prevention orders will be used against individuals and organisations believed to be involved in drug and people trafficking, money laundering and other forms of organised crime where there's not enough evidence to justify a criminal prosecution, The Guardian reported.

The package includes sweeping powers to share personal data across the public and private sector for crime prevention purposes, including 'fishing' expeditions – officially "mining to identify suspicious profiles" against individuals.

A High Court could issue the civil orders, with the balance of probabilities as the standard of proof.

There could be no punitive elements without breaching human rights. Instead, conditions would be imposed to prevent crimes being committed, with up to five years' imprisonment available to the courts if the orders are breached.

Preventative conditions could include travel restrictions, limiting phone use to a prescribed list of numbers, and restrictions on financial dealings, such as requiring the use of specified credit cards and bank accounts only, and restrictions on the amount of cash carried.

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– from the European Parliament through member Chris Michaelsen, 9 July 06

CIA kidnapped citizens, airlifted them to torture regimes, says EU

The CIA was directly responsible for the "illegal seizure, removal, abduction and detention of terrorist suspects" in Europe, says an interim report adopted by the European Parliament (EP) in July.

The report criticises the involvement and complicity of some European Union (EU) states, and calls for much more stringent compliance with human rights and international aviation laws.

Members of the EP (MEPs), by a 389 to 137 vote with 55 abstentions, gave the Temporary Committee headed by rapporteur Dick Marty the green light to continue investigating for another six months.

He is due to report by February 2007.

The CIA, noted the report, had been "directly responsible" for the extraordinary rendition, "illegal seizure, removal, abduction and detention of terrorist suspects on the territory of Member States, accession and candidate countries" – all of which constitute violations of fundamental rights under international law.

Using aircraft hired by front companies, the CIA had illegally transferred people to countries which frequently use torture during interrogations. With that in mind, MEPs called for extraordinary renditions to be "clearly prohibited" in international law.

Member States may be held liable for failure to comply with the European Convention of Human Rights, MEPs said, because EU countries have a positive obligation to prevent human rights violations on their territory.

They also have a duty to investigate whether their territory and their airspace have been used in human rights violations.

The document says it was "implausible" that countries were not aware of what the CIA was doing, and singled out Italy, Bosnia, Sweden and the 'old Macedonia'.

MEPs again called for closing the prison at Guantanamo, asking Member States to "take a proactive role" in finding a solution for the detainees.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from UNity, UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 27 July 2006

### **Jordan helps the US engage in torture, says Amnesty**

Jordan maintains a military security agency that detains, interrogates and tortures political and security suspects, both Jordanians and other nationals transferred to the country in apparent coordination with the USA, according to an Amnesty International report.

The report describes the cases of dozens of individuals subjected to torture and ill-treatment in Jordan, 10 of whom appear to be victims of the US-led 'rendition program'. <http://amnesty-news.c.topica.com/maae0u7abr85jbfE1obb/>

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– from The Guardian, 27 July 2006

Police want more power to eavesdrop on computer traffic

UK police and security agencies are lobbying ministers and senior officials, expressing fears about the potential for voice-over-internet-protocol technologies to hide a caller's identity.

They want VoIP* providers to monitor calls and find ways to identify who is calling whom, and even record the calls.

* Voice over Internet Protocol (best-known service is Skype: cheap phones calls via computer links)

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– from a report by Helen Dowd and agencies, The Guardian, 287 July 2006

### **Briton on Pakistan's death row gets last-minute stay**

Pakistan president General Musharraf has granted a one-month stay of execution to a British man due to die.

Mirza Tahir Hussain had been scheduled to hang in the first hours of August.

Mr Hussain, 36, has spent half his life in jail after being convicted of the murder of a taxi driver in 1988, a crime he has always maintained he did not commit.

The Pakistani high court cleared Mr Hussain of the murder seven years after his death sentence in 1989. But his conviction was reinstated in 1998 after an Islamic court took over the case.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from an EDITORIAL, New York Times, 16 July 2006

The cost of Executive arrogance

To a disturbing degree, the horror of 9/11 became an excuse to take up this cause (the US President needing more power, according to Vice-President Cheney) behind the shield of Americans' deep insecurity.

The results have been devastating. Americans' civil liberties have been trampled.

The nation's image as a champion of human rights has been gravely harmed.

Prisoners have been abused, tortured and even killed at the prisons we know about, while other prisons operate in secret.

American agents "disappear" people, some entirely innocent, and send them off to torture chambers in distant lands.

Hundreds of innocent men have been jailed at Guantánamo Bay without charges or rudimentary rights.

And Congress has shirked its duty to correct this out of fear of being painted as pro-terrorist at election time...

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– from Human Rights First email, 19 July 2006

### **Two cases call into question Thai civil liberties and justice systems**

One year ago the Thai Ministry of Justice assigned its Department of Special Investigations (DSI) to two defender cases:

Somchai Neelaphajit went missing soon after filing a torture complaint against the police. The noted Muslim lawyer was last seen being forced into a car in Bangkok on 12 March 2004.

Five policemen were arrested in connection with the lawyer's disappearance, but the mismanaged trial saw four defendants acquitted and one convicted in January 2006 on a single charge of coercion.

Phra Supoj Suvacano was killed in June 2005 after the Buddhist monk challenged efforts by businessmen to take control of forest lands belonging to the local community and temple.

There have been no signs of progress one year after the investigation supposedly began, and DSI is not being held accountable, Human Rights First (HRF) said as it called for a campaign by phone and email to put pressure on the Thai Minister of Justice.

More than 20 people throughout Thailand have been murdered or 'disappeared' with impunity over five years, HRF says in a new report.

<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/pubs/pubs.asp> - losing

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– from a report by Joseph H Kahn, New York Times, 4 July 2006

Beijing proposes law to curb journalists reporting on 'disasters'

A Chinese draft law threatens to fine local and foreign media for reporting on 'sudden incidents' without permission.

The law, now under consideration, calls for fines of up to about \$17,000 for unauthorized reports on outbreaks of disease, natural disasters, social disturbances or other sudden incidents that officials determine to be false or harmful to China's social order.

Wang Yongqing, vice minister of the legislative affairs office of China's State Council, or cabinet, told reporters at a news briefing last month that the law should apply to all news organizations, including foreign newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets.

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– from a report by Howard W. French, New York Times, 4 July 2006

## **Chinese threaten crackdown on internet, mobile phones**

According to Tsinghua University in Beijing, China now has 36.8 million blog sites and 16 million bloggers, while other reports suggest there are 100 million people accessing the internet.

Chinese authorities see search engines as an important choke point for information, and there are controversial agreements by Microsoft, Google and Yahoo to filter the search engine services they offer in China, screening out words the Chinese authorities deem troublesome.

Chinese authorities are threatening to bring in controls on the Internet and other communications technologies, including instant messaging and mobile phones.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

–from a report by Nicholas Watt in The Guardian (UK), 18 July 2006

Dutch court OKs pedophile party contesting general election

The Netherlands will not stop a new political party formed by paedophiles contesting the general election in November.

A Dutch court rejected an attempt by anti-pedophile campaigners to ban the Brotherly Love, Freedom and Diversity party (PNVD), which wants to cut the age of consent from 16 to 12 and to legalise child pornography, The Guardian reported.

"Freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association should be seen as the foundations of the democratic rule of law and the PNVD is also entitled to these freedoms," the court in The Hague said in a statement.

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– from a report by Monica Davey in the New York Times, 15 July 2006

## **Missouri can't find a doctor who'll execute**

The US State of Missouri can't find a board-certified anesthesiologist to oversee death penalty executions by lethal injection.

Judge Fernando J. Gaitan Jr. of the US District Court for the Western District of Missouri, some months ago found an improvised injection process was so chilling that he temporarily barred executions in Missouri.

Officials said they had sent letters to 298 certified anesthesiologists and were turned down by all of them.

The American Society of Anesthesiologists and the American Medical Association say physicians should not take part in executions

Missouri has executed 66 people by lethal injection since 1989.

The outcome in Missouri may affect the other 36 US States which execute people by lethal injection.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from ACLU media release, 11 July 2006

ACLU unties gag on its board members

The American Civil Liberties Union's National Board of Directors has overturned proposed guidelines criticised as limiting dissent and free speech, according to ACLU president Nadine Strossen.

"We will ensure that any description of Board members' obligations to the ACLU accurately reflects the ACLU's abiding commitment to the free speech rights of all, including (the rights of) ACLU Board members," she said.

A committee created by the ACLU's 83-member board of directors had earlier proposed guidelines on board members' fiduciary obligations which included that they were not free to comment on board discussions.

The guidelines, critics said, were not consistent with the ACLU's civil libertarian principles.

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– from a report by Lisa O'Carroll, The Guardian (UK), 6 July 2006

### **Irish to introduce new privacy, press and defamation laws**

Ireland's is proposing new privacy legislation be introduced along with a statutory press council and reforms to the 1961 libel and slander laws.

The newspaper industry has welcomed the defamation laws, but there are fears that the privacy legislation is flawed, The Guardian reported.

Actions that will be deemed to be breach of privacy include any form of surveillance, disclosure of material obtained by surveillance, the use of a person's likeness for financial gain without consent, the disclosure of letters, diaries, medical records or other personal documents and harassment.

Even material already in the public domain or information passed on to a third party without a person's consent could be deemed a breach of privacy under the new proposals, according to Lisa O'Carroll's report.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from a report by Rebecca Smithers, The Guardian (UK), 15 July 2006

UK school plans to fingerprint students and scan to record attendance

From September, students at a British school will be fingerprinted, have their details kept on a database, and be scanned each time they go in and out of the school.

Fingerprints will be transformed into digital data and stored on a computer.

The school's sixth formers claim their human rights are being infringed, and that storing biometric data on computer systems breaches their privacy rights.

"Several pupils said using the scanners would make them feel like criminals," The Guardian's education editor, Rebecca Smithers, reported.

Edgbarrow school in Crowthorne, Berkshire, wants to run a pilot for a year with sixth formers before rolling the scheme out to all students.

The UK's Liberty organisation is reported as saying: "Our main concerns are what will happen to this data after the students have left the school. We will be monitoring the scheme."

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from Human Rights Watch, 14 July 2006

### **Sudanese Government accused of using laws to harass rights workers**

In the Sudan, Dr Nagib Nagm Eldine, director of the Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, was arrested on 9 July.

He was interrogated about reports issued by the Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT), with whom his organization is affiliated, concerning the summary trials of hundreds of protestors following the sudden death of First Vice President Dr. John Garang in August 2005.

Dr Nagib, released on bail nine hours later, was accused of providing information to SOAT, and is being investigated for offences such as publication of false news and defamation.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) claims the incident is part of a broader campaign aimed against SOAT and its partner organizations.

“At a time when the government of Sudan is responsible for mass killings, torture, rape and other serious human rights violations, it is vital that non-governmental organizations are allowed to function freely,” HRW says.

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– from an article by Alan Travis in The Guardian (UK), 21 July 2006

New 'get tough' justice package for England: more jails, longer sentences

The British Home Secretary, John Reid, has launched a 24-point "get tough" criminal justice package.

In the face of a record prison population in England and Wales of 78,000 and climbing, Mr Reid is trying to build out of a prisons crisis by creating a further 8,000 prison places at the same time as imposing longer sentences for the most serious criminals.

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– from New York Times, 21 July 2006

### **Vote 1 for the main chance**

In November voters in the US State of Arizona will be asked to approve a new lottery designed to attract more voters by running a raffle with a \$1 million grand prize.

You would earn a ticket by turning up to a polling place and having your vote recorded.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

– from UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 21 July 2006

Book reviewers wanted

The Journal for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict is looking for people interested in writing book reviews: about 5 pages (Courier New, 1.5 space, 12pt) deadline 8 January 2007.

MacQueen: Peacekeeping and the International System
Alvarez: International Organizations as Law-Makers
Caplan: International Governance of War-Torn Territories
Clapham: Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors
Trechsel: Human Rights in Criminal Proceedings

The journal is looking for reviewers of books published in its series on international law, for publishing in various German and Austrian journals.

Information, contact Noelle Quéniwet, Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict, Ruhr-University Bochum, 44780 Bochum, Germany. E: noelle.quenivet@rub.de

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

### **WHAT'S DOING**

**31 July – 3 Aug, Suva, Fiji:** 11th annual meeting Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, hosted by Fiji Human Rights Commission.

**August, Goulburn:** Rally in the Park for David Hicks – CANCELLED due to US Supreme Court ruling for Geneva Conventions/military trial..

**9 August, Canberra:** 5.30pm – Report on a 6 African Country Study: female genital mutilation and childbirth, Assoc Prof. Emily Banks, at John Curtin School for Medical Research, ANU. RSVP: olivia.harkin@anu.edu.au or ph: 6125 5626.

**11 August, Australia:** Entries close for HREOC essay and art competitions focus on rights open to young people living in Australia from the ages of 11 to 18. Prizes include iPods or digital cameras to the national winners and the Australian Red Cross has prizes for State and Territory winners. Details: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/competitions/index.html> or call 02 9284 9635.

**12 August, Canberra:** 9-4.30 Social Justice Expo, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Details and bookings: Juditch Shaw 6251 2272.

**25-26 August, Sydney:** UN Association of Australia national conference 06, Holme Centre, U. Sydney. Theme Community - We the peoples'. Info: <http://www.unaansw.org.au/conference/index.php>

**27 August, Australia:** Refugee and Migrant Sunday, with special emphasis in 2006 on Burmese refugees. Details: <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/rms>

**14 September, Canberra:** 6pm, National Library of Australia.

CLA Forum with ISAA & NLA\*: Sedition: Defending or Subverting Freedom? Keynote speakers: Professor Simon Bronitt (Director National Europe Centre and Professor College of Law, ANU), David Marr (SMH journalist, ex-ABC Media Watch presenter). All invited. \* CLA in conjunction with Independent Scholars Association of Australia and the NLA.

**10 December, World:** Human Rights Day [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

**10/10/10 World:** Target date for a moratorium on the death penalty – 10/10 for Life.

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THE LAST WORD: details from the New York Times, 14 July 2006

Mayor sued because school mobile phone ban 'violates rights of parents'

From a story by Anemona Hartocollis

Eight New York City parents and a parents association have sued the Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, over a ban on students carrying mobile phones in New York schools.

One mother says she relies on her older children to take care of the youngest after school, and they use mobile phones to coordinate who does the pick-up.

The group filed a suit on 13 July against the Mayor, the schools' boss and the Department of Education, seeking to overturn the city's ban on students carrying mobile phones in schools.

The parents argue that the ban is so broad it violates their constitutional right as parents to keep their children safe and to raise them in the way they see fit.

It violates their right to personal liberty under both the New York state and the US federal constitutions, they say, by interfering with the relationship between parents and their children, without a compelling education reason.

Over May-June, police confiscated more than 3,000 mobile phones in random searches at school doors, and principals confiscated many more, the paper said.

Stay on hold, and we'll let you know the outcome.

~~~~~ [Top of the Document](#)

**ENDS #### ENDS #### ENDS ####**

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