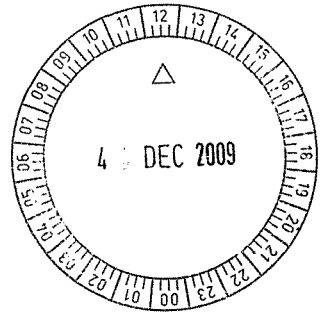


Ben Watson



Re: Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2009

Dear Chairman,

Please find attached my recent open letter to all members of the Legislative Council regarding the proposed Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2009.

It is my belief that this proposed Bill is irresponsible, granting undue powers to the police to stop and search members of the public without due cause or permission.

This is an affront to the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy, central to our way-of-life.

It also violates the presumption of innocence—a cornerstone of Australian law.

This letter has received a warm response both from Members of Parliament, and from many colleagues and members of the public.

Many of these people share my concerns regarding the short-sighted and irresponsible nature of this proposed legislation, and indeed many have submitted letters themselves questioning its effectiveness.

I would argue that the majority of Western Australians, if they were aware of the true implications of this Bill, would oppose the legislation—and that, if it were to be implemented, there would be a strong and very genuine voter backlash against those responsible for passing it.

The Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2009 is clearly ineffective, unpopular, and unprincipled; and I implore you to ensure that it does not pass into law.

Regards,

Ben Watson
Citizen.

PUBLIC

Ben Watson

Open Letter to the Legislative Council of Western Australia

Dear Ministers,

I write to you with regard to your upcoming vote on the Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2009.

This legislation, which will grant to police unprecedented powers to ‘stop and search’ members of the public without reasonable suspicion or permission, has been widely condemned—both by members of the voting public, and those in the legal profession.

The proposed legislation violates fundamental principles of liberal democracy—not least of which the presumption of innocence, which has been a corner-stone of our justice system for centuries, with good cause.

We all understand the desire for security in our community, however we must ask ourselves how much of our hard-earned civil liberties we wish to sacrifice to this end.

As Benjamin Franklin wrote: "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety".

The ‘Northbridge problem’ is a difficult one and we will find a solution to it eventually—but this is not the answer. Witness the environmental protesters being issued Move-On Notices in Bunbury on 20 October—these notices were designed to protect people in Northbridge, yet they were ultimately utilised to undermine the democratic right to protest.

Is this the legacy we want to leave our children? And is this the reason our war veterans fought the fascists—so our freedom could be given away again with the stroke of a pen?

This weekend the Australian newspaper described Western Australia as the “worst offender” in the nation when it comes to the undermining of citizens’ rights. Do you want to be remembered with the same distaste as Joh Bjelke-Petersen?

This is a crucial time in our state’s history, one of incredible expansion and sudden affluence. Accordingly, social problems have developed. However, we must find real solutions.

I urge both sides of politics, as well as members from minor parties and independents, to vote ‘NO’ on this legislation. Let’s work together to find real solutions.

Regards,



Ben Watson
Citizen.