

Search for Your Rights

Media Statement Friday 14 October 2011

Oppressive police tactics shock community group

Police raids on the houses of three members of a community action group on Wednesday have been condemned by Search For Your Rights.

“In two separate raids, three peoples’ homes were raided in a shocking demonstration of the type of heavy-handed tactics we at Search For Your Rights were fearful of in the lead up to CHOGM” Pearl Lim, Search For Your Rights spokesman said today.

“These were the homes of members of the CHOGM Action Network, a legal community group dedicated to peacefully raising some of the issues in our Commonwealth.”

The three were all arrested on suspicion of spray-painting the word ‘PROTEST’ on public property.

One of the three arrested, Colleen Bulger, said that it was obvious the police were there for more than spray cans.

“They kept asking about CHOGM and were very interested in leaflets we had around the house” she said.

“When they arrested me they kept saying ‘we know more than you think’, and suggesting that I had been under surveillance” Ms Bulger said. “It’s absolutely harassment and an attempt to intimidate us into stopping lawful activities”.

Another victim of the raids, who wishes to remain nameless, hadn’t been at home when the raid occurred, but was followed by the police to university where he was arrested on Thursday morning.

“They implied that the suspected offence wasn’t what concerned them, and that it was the protest that they were interested in” he said.

Those arrested have also had their phones confiscated in order for the police to download information in an unnecessary breach of privacy.

The third man arrested, Seamus Doherty, also had his car confiscated after being released with no charge. Seamus is mobility impaired had told the police that his car and his phone “were his lifelines to work and family” and without them he was suffering “stress and possible loss of a job.”

“How can we claim to promote civil democracy across the Commonwealth when peaceful activists are intimidated by police in our own State?” Ms Lim said. “Mr Barnett claimed he upholds the right to protest- but here we see the truth.”

“If the police were so interested in getting flyers about the protest, they could have saved themselves the manpower and downloaded them off the website- it is an approved, public event” Ms Lim said.

“This kind of behaviour is deplorable, and is a worrying sign of what is tolerated by the government that supports top and search laws, anti-association laws and prohibited behaviour orders.”

The CHOGM Protest will be held at Forrest Place at 10am Friday 28th October. Search For Your Rights is in no way affiliated with the CHOGM Action Network nor has any involvement with the protest.

Search for Your Rights is a non-partisan community group of over 2,300 members, initially formed to oppose the Barnett government’s stop and search laws. The group has expanded its platform to oppose further aspects of the Barnett Government’s extreme law and order agenda.

Media contact: Alex Cassie 0421 201 368 searchforyourrights@gmail.com