

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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MEDIA RELEASE BY TERRY O'GORMAN **PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES**

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton is again engaging in overblown rhetoric in calling for an Australia wide Public Register to track child sex offenders.

Australian Council for Civil Liberties President Terry O’Gorman said that in claiming the National Register will allow the public to go online to check up on people in contact with their children or in the community, Mr Dutton appears to be unaware of the current array of schemes that exist that result in close supervision of people convicted of child sex offences.

“Around the country there are ever widening Blue Card Schemes which prevent people who have not even been convicted of child sex offences but have been convicted of other criminal offences from working with children, even indirectly”, Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that similarly, people convicted of child sex offences committed 30 or 40 years ago are forced onto State Reporting Registers thereby being prevented from having any contact with children.

“These Registers require people who come in contact with children, even accidentally, to report their contact to a supervising Police Officer who has the power to haul the person in for questioning”, Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that as well, Dangerous Prisoner legislation in all the States and Territories regularly results in an ever widening pool of prisoners being subject to Attorney-General Applications in the Supreme Court to either keep a prisoner in jail beyond their full time release date or be released subject to an often very long list of restrictive conditions, often numbering in the twenties or thirties.

Mr O’Gorman further said that Mr Dutton is engaging in the same sort of sleight-of-hand tactic as revealed in the recent Prakash citizenship stripping debacle when he claims the National Register will allow the public to go online to check up on people in contact with their children or to check where such people are in the community.

“Blue Card and reporting schemes adequately deal with offenders being in contact with children”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“But allowing an online Register to be searched to ascertain who ‘in the community’ has a child sex offence no matter whether it is 40 years old or committed within a family setting will promote vigilantism and prevent rehabilitation and reintegration of a child sex offender into the community”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“As demonstrated by his overreach and incompetence in the Prakash scenario, Mr Dutton in pushing for a National Register of sex offenders is promoting a remedy for a non-existent problem”, Mr O’Gorman said.

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