

Liberty Victoria

**Annual Report 2023-2024**

**LIBERTY  
VICTORIA**

Liberty Victoria's office is on the lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners.

We would also like to pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and to all First Nations people who may read this annual report.

**Liberty Victoria acknowledges that sovereignty was never ceded.**

<b>The Liberty Victoria Team</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>President's Report</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Voltaire Awards</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Treasurer's Report</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Rights Advocacy Project</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Rights Advocacy Project Team</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Submissions and Policy Work</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Press Releases and Public Letters</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Liberty in the News</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Support Liberty Victoria</b>	<b>21</b>

## The Liberty Victoria Team

### Leadership group

**President:** Michelle Bennett

**Senior Vice-President:** Sam Norton

**Vice-President:** Jamie Gardiner OAM

**Vice-President:** Thomas Kane

**Vice-President:** Gemma Cafarella

**Secretary:** Hannah Dickinson

**Treasurer:** Gregory Buchhorn

**Immediate Past President:**  
Michael Stanton SC

**Patron:** The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG

### Rights Advocacy Project

Kiara Wagner

Shauna Stanley

Gnei Perez

### Executive Officer

Helia Mehrabani

### Volunteer Co-ordinator

Lindy Smith



*Liberty Victoria President Michelle Bennett*

### General Committee

Brigid Arthur AO

Katharine Brown

Julian Burnside AO KC

Gabriel Chipkin

Jessica Coverdale

Hannah Figueiroa

Virajith Hewaarachchi

Tom Lockwood

Zubin Menon

Tessa Mayberry

Hugo Moodie

Rishi Nathwani KC

Isabelle Skaburskis

Jessie Taylor

Vincent Vuu

Professor Spencer Zifcak

Jonathan Cooper

Julia Kretzenbacher

Evelyn Tadros

Jay Chandramohan

Rochelle Francis

Arabella Close

## President's Report

The strength of Liberty Victoria has always been, and will continue to be, in its people. Our Committees are filled with talented, knowledgeable, and highly motivated individuals who give their time, energy, and skills to further our work. I am grateful for their unwavering dedication to considering draft legislation, government proposals and current events and their implications, particularly for vulnerable individuals and groups. It is through their efforts that we are able to continue the work of defending and extending human rights and civil liberties across Victoria and beyond.

There has been a huge volume of issues to keep our Committees occupied in the last year. Disappointingly, they have had to work under enormous time pressure to respond as both State and Federal governments have announced major legislation with minimal consultation time. Just last week, the Federal Government allowed only one day for submissions after releasing a Bill to limit access to social media for persons under 16.

In the same week, there was a period of three business days allowed for submissions on another bill which would grant the Government broad powers to re-detain and forcibly remove non-citizens, reimpose punitive and discriminatory conditions while exempting its agents from civil liability for harms caused through exercise of these extraordinary powers.

These measures follow the High court ruling in YBFZ and continue a depressing trend of demonising asylum seekers in a year in which Palestinian refugees in particular have been treated as political footballs.

The rush to legislate, and curtail the opportunity for any meaningful scrutiny, is deeply disturbing, but our Committee

members responded with powerful and considered submissions in exceptionally short order. It spoke to their commitment, their refusal to allow human rights to be overridden in a rush of populism and political expediency, to take a stand and raise their voices in defence of others.

In the last year we have made submissions on freedom of information, freedom of association, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to privacy. We supported Murphy's Law to curtail gambling advertising and the introduction of pill testing at festivals.

We have made representations on the need to hold the State and its instrumentalities to account for their actions, to require disclosure and accountability even as legislation was passed to immunise them from the consequence of police misconduct in the Lawyer X scandal.

We called for more support for people seeking asylum, an end to forced removal of persons at risk of persecution overseas, and the harsh and discriminatory detention measures that the High Court has repeatedly rejected and the Government repeatedly sought to reinstate. This year has seen a barrage of negative messaging from a range of politicians seeking to remove all rights, hopes and dignity of people seeking asylum.

Our immediate past president Michael Stanton SC and Committee Member Isabelle Skaburskis gave powerful evidence to the Commonwealth Inquiry into Right Wing Extremist Movements in Australia. Together with Jonathon Cooper they also provided considered and insightful written submissions in relation to the need for protection of privacy and freedom of expression as well as effective measure for fostering social cohesion.

We have continued to call for the abolition of mandatory sentencing, to require police disclosure, retain committal hearings and reject myriad other incursions on the fundamental rights of an accused person. We saw progress as the age of criminal responsibility was raised from 10 to 12, but voiced our disappointment as the Government then backed away from their commitment to raise it again to 14, and backflipped on bail reforms for children. There is a disturbing contrast between the Federal Government's position that people under 16 lack the judgement and maturity to deal with the risk of harm online and the belief of the Victorian Government (as well as other States and Territories) that those same children should be presumed to have an adult's capacity to form criminal intent and be subjected to remand and imprisonment.

The contrast between the delay and debate on gambling advertising compared to the rush to introduce the social media bill without hearing from those most affected is equally striking.

One of the most notable features of the political landscape in Melbourne, and Australia, has been the number of protests occurring - in particular in response to the war in Palestine. The right to protest, to express opposition and to draw attention to a cause has come under repeated attack. Liberty Victoria will continue to strongly advocate in defence of the right to protest.

Protest is one of the most powerful tools for social and political change. In Australia, this right has historically been essential in securing many of the freedoms and protections we now take for granted. The struggles for civil rights, Indigenous sovereignty, environmental protection, and labour rights have all been driven by public

protest. Defending the right to protest is not only about protecting freedom of expression; it is about ensuring that people can continue to challenge power, question injustices, and demand that our leaders be held accountable.

We have also sought to preserve the right not to be subject to arbitrary and intrusive police searches, particular as such search powers have been used as a tool to discourage the exercise of our right to protest.

In the face of these challenges, it is essential to remember the fundamental purpose that drives Liberty Victoria. Our organisation exists to defend and extend human rights and civil liberties, and our roots stretch back to the founding of Australia's first civil liberties organisation in 1936. While we are incredibly proud of this legacy, Liberty Victoria is not just a historical entity – it is a living, breathing community of people who share a commitment to the principles of justice, equality, and freedom.

That spirit was powerfully embodied at our Voltaire Awards Dinner, held on November 15th. We all left the evening deeply moved and inspired by the remarkable individuals who were recognised. To hear from our deserving winners – Antoinette Lattouf, Samara Fernandez-Brown, and about the courageous journalists honoured by the Empty Chair Award – was an uplifting reminder of the vital importance of standing firm in defence of our. Their resilience and unwavering commitment to justice were a timely reminder of the strength we draw from those who champion human rights, often at great personal cost.

Samara held the room in her hand as she accepted the first Sophie Trevitt Award,

previously known as the Young Voltaire Award. It has been named in honour of last year's Voltaire winner, the late Sophie Trevitt, and we were proud to be able to honour her in this way.

Going into the next year we are particularly sorry to be losing two former Presidents, Jessie Taylor and Julia Kretzenbacher, from our committees. The contribution they have made, before, during and in the continued commitment following their terms as President cannot be overstated. We trust they will continue to be strong supporters of Liberty Victoria, and while they would both be entitled to sit back and rest on their laurels we know it is in their DNA to continue to make an extraordinary contribution in all their future endeavours.

Virajith Hewaarchchi and Jay Chandramohan have also resigned from our committee, after several years in which they have lent their considerable expertise to both lead and contribute to

many important submissions and we thank them for all of their work and dedication during their time. Finally, our Volunteer co-ordinator Lindy Smith has also resigned, and we thank her for all her efforts to support us and our volunteers, including in particular at the Voltaire Awards in 2023.

While we will miss the contribution of all of these Committee Members we are grateful for all they have done to date. We are also grateful to all those who continue to contribute their time and energy. With their efforts, together with the support of all our members and sponsors, we will consider this important work.

**Michelle Bennett,**  
President, Liberty Victoria



*Addressing the Voltaire Awards Dinner Guests*

## Voltaire Awards

The Voltaire awards are a celebration of free speech, and of Liberty Victoria's continued work to defend and extend civil liberties and human rights throughout Australia.

The Voltaire awards are given annually to people, groups and/or organisations across three categories - the Voltaire Human Rights Award itself, the Young Voltaire Human Rights Award, and the Empty Chair Human Rights Award. These awards are given to those who have made an outstanding contribution to free speech, civil liberties and/or human rights.

### The Voltaire Award

The Voltaire Human Rights Award honours a person who has made an outstanding contribution to human rights, free speech and/or civil liberties, with emphasis on progressing freedom, respect, equality, dignity and action.

The recipient of this year's Liberty Victoria Voltaire Human Rights award is Antoinette Lattouf, in recognition of her role as a broadcaster, journalist and advocate for diversity and mental health.

As a woman from a Lebanese and working-class background working in the Australian media, Antoinette has used her voice to speak in support of a range of causes. Some of these are deeply personal and painful for her and reflect her perspective which comes from a place of difference from most of the faces seen in mainstream media. Her book "How to Lose Friends and Influence White People" aims to help people effectively champion change and racial equality. She is also an ambassador for the parent's mental health through the Gidget Foundation, following her own debilitating experience of post-natal depression. She has particularly championed diversity and inclusion in media as a co-founder of Media Diversity Australia.

Antoinette has recently come to national and international attention after she was sacked by the ABC for resharing a post by Human Rights Watch which reported on starvation being used as a weapon of war against civilians in Gaza. She has responded to this by reaffirming her views that "a journalist is meant to stand up and expose abuses of power... A journalist is meant to report without fear or favour." Antoinette has ignited a national conversation on free speech, the importance of an independent public broadcaster, and the way race and political opinion can be weaponised against some Australians. This matter is now the subject of an unfair dismissal claim and before the courts.

### The Sophie Trevitt Award

This year's winner of the Sophie Trevitt Human Rights Award is Samara Fernandez-Brown, a Warlpiri woman from Yuendumu who has represented her family in their long running battle for justice and reform after her cousin, Kumanjayi Walker, was shot and killed by police in the Northern Territory in 2019. Samara became a leader of the Justice For Walker campaign throughout the criminal trial and coronial inquest. She continues to advocate for the prevention of Indigenous deaths in custody as the "Stop Black Deaths in Custody Campaigner" at the Dhadjowa Foundation, a national grassroots organisation that's been established to provide strategic, coordinated and culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families whose loved ones have died in custody.

The Sophie Trevitt Award (formerly the Young Voltaire) is awarded to someone no older than 30 at the date of their nomination for an outstanding contribution to or action on free speech, human rights and/or civil liberties, with particular emphasis on

progressing freedom, respect, equality and dignity. It celebrates those who speak out, write, campaign, whistle-blow, take action or a stand against authoritarianism.

Liberty Victoria applauds the strength and resilience Samara has shown in her long and deeply personal fight for justice and the protection of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as her ongoing commitment to tangible change and healing.

### The Empty Chair Award

Established in 2016, this award goes to a person or group of people who have made an outstanding contribution to free speech and who cannot accept it in person due to the consequences of their exercise of, or advocacy for free speech.

In an era in which the social media revolution has created an avalanche of disinformation and conflicts polarise communities across the world, the role of independent journalism has never been more critical to the protection of human rights and civil liberties. The role of journalists can be dangerous and come at a high personal price, particularly when reporting from conflict zones. The extreme price that journalists can pay for their commitment to their ideals has been brought into tragic focus in Palestine where, at the time of writing, over 120 journalists are reported to have been killed in the past year.

This year's Liberty Victoria Voltaire Awards Dinner was held on 15 November 2024, which marks the PEN International Day of the Imprisoned Writer. This day highlights the cases of writers who are imprisoned or facing persecution and calls for urgent international action to release and protect them.

In recognition of the importance of the work of journalists working in conflict zones, the difficulties they endure and the extreme sacrifice so many have made, this year's Liberty Victoria Voltaire Empty Chair Award has been dedicated to all journalist and writers who have been killed or are suffering imprisonment for their work in reporting from conflict zones. The Award recognizes in particular the work of journalists who have died and those who continue to put their lives in danger to report from Palestine.



**Voltaire Award Winner**  
**Antoinette Lattouf**



**Sophie Trevitt Award Winner**  
**Samara Fernandez-Brown**



## Treasurer's Report

Like many of our members and supporters, pressures from cost-of-living increases have presented challenges for Liberty Victoria.

Over the past financial year, Liberty Victoria has seen a decline in revenue, including in all forms of donations and regular giving. While events such as the Voltaire Human Rights dinner and RAP events have been well attended and continue to generate important funds, sales were down from previous years.

The difficult economic climate has also seen Liberty Victoria's costs increase. One additional expense has been works to update Liberty's website. The website is in need of modernising to improve its usability. This is a critical investment to ensure Liberty's important work is clearly visible and reaches as wide an audience as possible.

Despite these challenges, the careful stewardship of Liberty Victoria's finances over the past few years has meant we have been able to draw on our reserves to offset last year's deficit. This has allowed Liberty Victoria to keep membership fees stable and events affordable, allowing Liberty Victoria's work and its celebration of human rights champions to remain accessible to all.

We are genuinely grateful to our supporters who have generously donated both money and time to Liberty Victoria, without whom our organisation could not operate. We welcome that ongoing support and will continue to identify and grow opportunities to raise funds.

### Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure for the Twelve Months Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
<b>Income</b>		
Memberships	17,060.83	15,175.00
Donations	1,142.50	3,661.80
<b>Events</b>		
<i>Voltaire Dinner</i>	<i>64,386.60</i>	<i>71,211.75</i>
<i>Rap event income</i>	<i>8,479.77</i>	<i>9,478.64</i>
<b>Total Event Income</b>	<b>72,866.37</b>	<b>80,690.39</b>
Bank Interest	3,545.24	2,983.85
Other Income	54.91	0.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>94,614.94</b>	<b>102,511.04</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>94,614.94</b>	<b>102,511.04</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>		
Membership	345.00	0.00
Events	56,874.27	63,202.95
Website Development	1,585.41	0.00
Bank Merchant Fees	581.64	530.31
Accounting	412.78	696.90
Office costs	7,855.63	5,596.97
Salaries and contractors	47,155.02	44,578.76
Office Administration	347.00	0.00
Donations to External Parties	2,000.00	0.00
RAP Other Expenses	176.00	359.90
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>117,332.75</b>	<b>114,965.79</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>(22,717.81)</b>	<b>(12,454.75)</b>

### Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
<b>Assets</b>		
Prepayments - Events	7,000.00	6,935
Westpac General A/c	1,970.06	277
Petty Cash	0.95	50,000
Latrobe Financial Investment Account	0,000.00	50,000.00
High Interest Account	9,779.11	24,905.90
PayPal	6.67	501.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,756.79</b>	<b>90,782.90</b>

<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Total liabilities</b>	-	-
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>68,756.79</b>	<b>90,782.90</b>

<b>Equity</b>		
Liberty Leadership Fund Reserve Account	12,347.00	12,347.00
RAP Reserve Account	8,408.56	8,408.56
Retained Earnings	70,664.13	85,171.84
Current Earnings	(22,662.90)	(15,144.50)
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>68,756.79</b>	<b>90,782.90</b>

### What our members say



*I have found being a member of Liberty Victoria very stimulating: the experience has been both educative and hopeful.*

*I have enjoyed being part of a group of such good (and busy) people ready to work collaboratively to address issues involving justice.*

*Having a small group ready to explore actions that can be taken on behalf of asylum seekers has been very supportive.*



**– Sister Brigid Arthur AO**

## Rights Advocacy Project

This year has been one of change and growth for RAP.

The RAP Program is an 18-month program. Each program cycle we recruit between 15 to 20 early-career lawyers and law students, activists and emerging advocacy leaders and provide them with intensive training and capacity building to equip them with the skills, knowledge and tools to undertake strategic advocacy and law reform. Each program advocate is placed in one of three teams – criminal justice reform, equality and government accountability, and refugees and people seeking asylum. Each team is focused on a particular area of law or rights issue. Working in these teams, program advocates have the opportunity to tackle social justice issues they are passionate about, under the supervision and guidance of two experienced human rights thinkers and leaders. Our program offers an introduction to all aspects of social change - from strategic advocacy to political and stakeholder engagement, campaigning, messaging and media strategy. Over 18 months, program advocates will have the opportunity to develop, research and deliver a law reform campaign across criminal justice reform, refugee and asylum seeker rights or equality and government accountability. The project provides program advocates with the opportunity to be part of strategic law reform and impact-driven advocacy.

This year, whilst the previous project cycle teams worked to finish their projects, the RAP Steering Committee turned our attention to planning and delivering two community-building events.

The first event was a trivia fundraiser night, held in April 2024. We returned to the iconic 75 Reid Street in Fitzroy North for a second year and the night was once again hosted by the fabulous drag queen, Ty Fantasia.

Wazzup Falafel food truck attended to make sure our guests were well fed. We are indebted to the many businesses that made generous donations to the pool of raffle prizes. It was an evening of quality humour, rivalling competition, and community building. The event was very well attended by community lawyers, RAP alumni, and steering committee friends and family. Our deepest gratitude to the RAP community for showing up in support for our work.

Our second event was the first ever RAP Conference, held in September 2024. Under the theme “Lawyering for Change”, the RAP Conference featured a keynote speaker and three panel events. The keynote address was delivered by Nasser Mashni. Nasser spoke about the history of the fight for Palestinian liberation. Nasser also shared the challenges of being a public advocate and how he finds the strength to keep going in the face of this adversity. Our first panel of the day was about abolitionist lawyering - a discussion about police and prison abolition and how lawyers can work in ways to dismantle racist carceral systems. Our panellists were Maggie Munn, Sarah Schwartz, Joanne Schoenfelder, Karen Fletcher, and Nina Storey. The panel was moderated by Rochelle Francis. The panel had a rich discussion about police and prison abolition and how we can incorporate this into our work as lawyers and within the community. Our second panel discussed fighting for change in a system that is punitive towards refugees and people seeking asylum and how lawyers can better support communities mobilising change. The panellists were Sanmati Verma, Betia Shakiba, and Ian Seal. The panel was moderated by Isabella Farrell-Hallegraeff. The panel drew on their varied experiences in the refugee law system and shared inspiring reflections about how lawyers working in this space can mobilise

change and respond to oppressive laws. Our final panel was a discussion about the encroachment on the right to protest in Victoria including the rise in police powers, and how we can protect our right to protest. The panellists were David Mejia-Canales, Reham Elzeiny, Adam Chernok, and Sophie L’Estrange. The moderator was Arabella Close. The panellists shared their knowledge and experiences of recent encroachment of protest rights, including the policing of Land Forces conference protest and discussed how we can continue to protect our right to protest. The RAP Conference also provided our teams with an opportunity to publicly present an update on their law reform projects. Attendees and organisers all agree that it was an excellent and inspiring day. Everyone left feeling energised and motivated to continue the good fight. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the day – especially our impressive speakers who generously shared their knowledge and experiences with us.

Whilst the steering committee was busy with these events, our teams continued their work on their law reform projects. We hope that their projects were be launched in late 2024 to early 2025.

These projects are:

- **Criminal justice reform:** The criminal justice team is working on a project to reform police stop and search powers, in particular to abolish consent searches and designated areas. Our deepest gratitude to project supervisors Tamar Hopkins and Gabriel Chipkin for their generosity, guidance and support for the team.
- **Climate justice:** The equality and government accountability team is working on an open letter to the United Nations special rapporteurs seeking review of the Australian government’s disproportionate and adverse treatment of environmental protesters. Our deepest gratitude to project supervisors Katharine Brown and Brad Jessup for their generosity, guidance and support for the team.
- **Rights of refugees and people seeking asylum:** The refugee and asylum seeker rights team is collaborating with the Visa Cancellation Working Group and looking into the reality of indefinite detention in Australia as a result of character cancellations under the Migration Act. The project seeks to chart the evolution



RAP members (from left): Rochelle, Isabella, Kiara, Shauna, and Arabella.

of certain provisions under the Migration Act that enable indefinite detention to explore the expectations Australia holds for refugees and people seeking asylum and the intersection between the criminal justice system and administrative detention. Our deepest gratitude to project supervisors Arti Chetty, Hannah Dickinson, and Sanmati Verma for their generosity, guidance and support for the team.

In the last year, we said farewell to Steering Committee member Sophie Lloyd. We thank her for her contributions and commitment to RAP. We are currently recruiting for new Steering Committee members and have big plans for RAP next year.

In the last year, Rochelle Francis stepped down as Chair and has remained on the Steering Committee as a General Member. I would like to thank Rochelle for her incredible work as Chair for the last several years and recognise her immense contributions to RAP.

We thank the members of Liberty Victoria for their ongoing support and commitment to RAP's vision and work, particularly current President Michelle Bennett. Finally, my sincere thanks to each member of the current Steering Committee Rochelle Francis, Shauna Stanley, Chris Chosich, Isabella Farrell-Hallegraeff, Arabella Close, Louise Conwell, Madeleine Ulbrick, and Kali Wischmann whose steadfast support has been critical to RAP's success this year.

In solidarity,

**Kiara Wagner**  
Chair, Rights Advocacy Project

### What our members say



*I have been involved with the Rights Advocacy Project of Liberty Victoria from my days as a law student to being the former Chair of RAP and now a member of Liberty Victoria.*

*There isn't anything else like the Rights Advocacy Project. It gave me the opportunity to work on a law reform project. Through it, I learnt how change happens and the role of law; I understood the type of lawyer I want to be and I found my community.*



**Rochelle Francis**  
Previous RAP chair

## The Rights Advocacy Project Team

### Steering Committee

**Chair:**

Kiara Wagner

**Deputy Chair & Program Manager:**

Shauna Stanley

**Treasurer:**

Gnei Perez

**Secretary:**

Chris Chosich

**Project Coordinator –  
Refugees & People Seeking Asylum:**

Isabella Farrell-Hallegraeff

**Project Coordinator –  
Criminal Justice Reform:**

Kiara Wagner

**Project Coordinator –  
Climate Justice:**

Rochelle Francis

**General Members:**

Arabella Close

Louise Conwell

Madeleine Ulbrick

Kali Wischmann

### RAP Volunteers

**Refugees & People Seeking Asylum**

Sherine Al Shallah

Imogen Hines

Dannielle McKinnon

Shruti Patil

Holly Woodlock

**Supervisors:**

Arti Chetty, Maria O'Sullivan, Hannah Dickinson & Sanmati Verma (consulting from the Visa Cancellations Working Group)

**Criminal Justice Reform**

Britney Aguirre

Joseph Cook

Denham Sadler

**Supervisors:**

Tamar Hopkins & Gabriel Chipkin

**Climate Justice**

Rose Barnsley

Brianna Delahunty

Sri Kumar

Mitch Ryan

Imogen Timms

**Supervisors:**

Katharine Brown & Brad Jessup



RAP Chair, Kiara, and previous RAP Chair, Rochelle

You can keep updated about our upcoming project on our website:  
[rightsadvocacyproject.org](https://rightsadvocacyproject.org)





### Joint letter from the Presidents of NSW Council for Civil Liberties and Liberty Victoria relating to the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza

16 November 2023

The Prime Minister,  
The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

This joint letter with the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties called for a ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid into Gaza.

### Inquiry into the Crimes Amendment (Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence) Bill 2024

27 March 2024

The Senate Legal and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee

This submission considered proposed amendments to the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) in relation to vulnerable witnesses and observed that some of the proposed amendments would be much more restrictive than equivalent provisions in Victoria and New South Wales, meaning that there is an inequality for those who are charged with Commonwealth offences. The proposed provisions have a real risk of resulting in miscarriages of justice.

### Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Removal and Other Measures) Bill 2024

12 April 2024

Senate Legal and Constitutional  
Affairs Legislation Committee

Liberty Victoria was appalled by the introduction of a Bill that, among other things, sought to jail people for at least a year if they fail to assist with their own removal even where they are owed Australia's non-refoulement obligations. The Bill also proposed to weaken protection findings to broaden who may be removed from Australia to the country from which they fled and exclude visa applications from countries designated by the Minister of the day.

### Inquiry into Right Wing Extremist Movements in Australia

22 April 2024

Senate Legal and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee

We have repeatedly called for a preventative rather than reactionary response to far-right extremism that addresses the drivers as to why some people are drawn to extremism in the first place; one that focuses on improving social cohesion and trust in institutions, including trust in government and the media, rather than focussing on expanding censorship and surveillance.

### Statement of Concern – Media and Political Commentary on Direction 99

7 June 2024

Minister for Immigration,  
Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

In this joint letter we observed that recent political and media attacks on legal procedures governing visa cancellation were of immense concern and threaten the rule of law and the integrity of institutions and outcomes. It is fundamentally necessary that institutions like the Administrative Appeals Tribunal are independent and able to perform its role without intimidation or influence.

### Inquiry into Right Wing Extremist Movements in Australia (Response to Questions on Notice)

7 August 2024

Senate Legal and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee

Response to questions on notice: (1) Responding to the submission by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation on the topic of encrypted messaging services; (2) The extent of limits that may be placed on speech to prevent and deter hate speech and violent extremism; and (3) Providing our position on the best practice regarding the oversight of police powers.

### Comment on the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024

30 September 2024

Parliament of Australia

Liberty Victoria opposes the Bill. We are deeply concerned that this Bill will result in the increasing normalisation of potentially draconian orders being made in circumstances where a person has not been convicted (or even charged) for a criminal offence.

### Submission in relation to the Inquiry into the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)

1 October 2024

Parliament of Australia,

Freedom of information (FOI) is a fundamental human right in itself, and a touchstone for all other rights and freedoms exercised by individuals within a functioning democratic society. To ensure the full enjoyment of this right, there must be "free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives".

### Comment on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Committals) Bill 2024

4 November 2024

Parliament of Australia

We oppose this Bill. Committal hearings have long served as a critically important part of the protections afforded in Victoria to persons accused of serious crimes. The current system holds significant value in ensuring adequate disclosure, promoting the early resolution of cases, minimising the impact on vulnerable witnesses and ultimately easing pressure on the criminal justice system.

### Inquiry into the Migration Amendment Bill 2024 (Cth)

22 November 2024

Senate Legal and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee

This Bill should be withdrawn without delay. Politicised attacks on people based on their visa status must end. The harms inflicted are severe, generational, and go to the heart of Australian culture and community. Liberty Victoria again calls for consultative and meaningful reform to establish an evidence-based and fair migration system in Australia.

### The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024

22 November 2024

Senate Standing Committees on  
Environment and Communications,

We oppose this Bill. There needs to be a more considered approach. Liberty Victoria advocates for more targeted interventions that aim to minimise harms while preserving social media's benefits for children under the age of 16. A blanket ban will be ineffective and indeed will make matters worse – and expose children to more harm – as the use of social media by children is pushed underground.

You can view all our  
submissions online at:  
[libertyvictoria.org.au/submissions](https://libertyvictoria.org.au/submissions)



## Press Releases and Public Letters

### Pill testing facilities at festivals

11 January 2024

### Statement on Entrapment

22 February 2024

### Liberty Victoria Statement on the Victorian Government's Backflip on Bail Reforms for Children and Proposed Electronic Monitoring

26 March 2024

### Joint CCLs letter re Migration Amendment Bill 2024

5 April 2024

### Banning book featuring same-sex parents violates human rights

9 May 2024

### Liberty Victoria and the Rights Advocacy Project - Statement on proposed expansion to police designated area search powers

25 June 2024

### Statement on Police Disclosure in Criminal Proceedings

7 August 2024

### Statement on Proposed Immunity for Those Involved in the Lawyer X Scandal

13 August 2024

### LGBTQIA+ people deserve protection from discrimination

14 August 2024

### Liberty Victoria Supports Murphy's Law

20 August 2024

### Liberty Victoria on Protest Rights

12 September 2024

### Comment on Bills Targeting Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

26 November 2024

You can view all our press releases online at:  
[libertyvictoria.org.au/press](https://libertyvictoria.org.au/press)



## What our members say



Since the Tampa affair, I've admired Liberty Victoria's work. It's vital to have civil society organisations that stand against penal populism and the erosion of the rule of law. There's never been a more important time to support our work.



**Michael Stanton SC**  
Previous President

## Liberty in the News

Published on | Authored by | Published by

### Troubling youth crime statistics serve as a warning for state's justice reform

24 December 2023

The Age

### Victorian Government continues to dodge scrutiny of youth prisons

19 January 2024

Human Rights Law Centre

### Victoria Police says wrongful arrest of former immigration detainee over sexual assault was not racial profiling

1 March 2024

ABC News

### Liberty Victoria say we need to be careful when punishing peaceful protest

6 March 2024

ABC Radio Melbourne

### Marketing herself as 'tougher' than Dutton is a mistake by Clare O'Neil

3 April 2024 | Sam Norton

The Age

### Labor's Mandatory Sentencing Problem

8 April 2024 | Michael Stanton

Right Now

### Controversy surrounds police stop and search laws

11 May 2024

The Saturday Paper

### The university vowed not to spy on students. Now it's using tracking data to punish them

8 July 2024

The Age

### Australia news live: Liberty Victoria expresses concerns over botched police investigation

8 August 2024

The Guardian

### Albanese Abandons the Religious Schools / Discrimination Reforms to the Coalition

16 August 2024

Sydney Criminal Lawyers

### Global Monitor Confirms Civil Liberties Continue to Wane Under Albanese

23 August 2024

Sydney Criminal Lawyers

### Victoria Police to Unleash Excessive Policing Powers on Disrupt Land Forces

10 September 2024

Sydney Criminal Lawyers

### Symbolic politics and 'terrorist' symbols

10 October 2024 | Michael Stanton

Pearls and Irritations

### 100 days of refugee-led protests: Open letter urges Government to resolve Fast Track failures

21 October 2024

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

### 'United against American-style division': Long-awaited anti-vilification reforms reach parliament

26 November 2024

The Age

You can view all 'Liberty in the News' items at:  
[libertyvictoria.org.au/in\\_the\\_news](https://libertyvictoria.org.au/in_the_news)



**“Three Brutal Bills” - Joint letter on Bills Targeting Refugees and People Seeking Asylum**

📅 27 November 2024  
✍️ The Saturday Paper

**Interview by Tom Elliott of Michael Stanton SC on Proposed Anti-Vilification Reforms (from 1:03:10)**

📅 27 November 2024  
✍️ 3AW

**THREE BRUTAL BILLS**

**The Albanese Government is reaching new levels of cruelty**

Right now, the Albanese Government is ramming through Parliament the most brutal migration Bills we've ever seen - escalating attacks on multicultural communities, migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum.

These life-altering Bills are being rushed with no time for scrutiny. The consequences will devastate thousands of lives, tear apart families, and set a dangerous precedent for human rights in Australia.

**If the Bills pass, the Albanese Government will be able to:**

- Expand Australia's offshore regime:** giving themselves new unprecedented power to send people to any third country that they pay.
- Deport people to danger:** forcing people to return to countries where they risk persecution, violence, or even death.
- Ban entire communities from entering Australia:** using vague, arbitrary criteria to block entry based on the country people are from.
- Tear families apart:** separating families, including parents from their children.
- Imprison people resisting deportation:** even when deportation means life-threatening danger.
- Cut off lifelines from people in detention:** confiscating mobile phones, isolating people from family, health professionals, and legal aid.
- Authorise dehumanising strip searches:** enabling more invasive and degrading searches of people in detention.

These laws will tear apart our communities, **with up to 80,000 people already living in Australia at risk of deportation** – people who we work with, study with, or live alongside.

**These brutal Bills must be stopped.** As advocates, legal experts, and frontline workers, we condemn the Albanese Government's brutal and knee-jerk expansion of powers.

Authorised by J. Favero, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 214-218 Nicholson St, Footscray, VIC, 3011

**You can help stop these brutal Bills**

Call your Senators today and demand they reject these far-reaching, unjust Bills. Together, we can block this cruelty and protect our multicultural communities. Scan the QR code or go to [action.asrc.org.au/brutal\\_bills](https://action.asrc.org.au/brutal_bills) to learn more and take action.

*We joined with more than 20 other organisations for a full-page letter in The Age*

## Support Liberty Victoria

### Become a member

Members are fundamental to our organisation and give us certainty in continuing our work. Individuals can become members for as little as \$60 a year\*.

To become a member, you can [visit our website](#) or scan the QR code to the right. More information is available on our website. If you require assistance becoming a member, email [info@libertyvictoria.org.au](mailto:info@libertyvictoria.org.au).

\*\$60/year applies to 5 year individual price. Concession memberships available for students, and people who are unwaged or retired.



Join

### Donate

Donations ensure we can continue to maximise our impact as an organisation.

You can donate [on our website](#), by scanning the QR code to the right, or by filling out the form on this page and sending it via email ([info@libertyvictoria.org.au](mailto:info@libertyvictoria.org.au)) or post (GPO Box 3161 Vic 3001).



Donate

I'll give:  \$20  \$25  \$30  \$50  \$100  Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency:  One time  Every month

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_  Visa  Mastercard

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ CCV: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**For more information, contact:**  
[info@libertyvictoria.org.au](mailto:info@libertyvictoria.org.au)  
GPO Box 3161, Melbourne, VIC 3001