

PRESS RELEASE

Federal Government's Proposed "Access Card"

Liberty Victoria will tomorrow liken the Federal Government's proposed "Access Card" to the cane toad.

Liberty Vice-Presidents Anne O'Rourke and Michael Pearce SC will tell the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee inquiry into the proposed legislation, that the card, like the cane toad, may be introduced with good intentions to deal with a serious problem and to save money.

However, like the cane toad, the so-called "Access Card" would become a pest and do more harm than good by turning into a national ID card.

"You cannot introduce an identification tool like the Access Card, bearing the imprimatur of the Commonwealth Government, into a society where identification is required on a regular basis and not expect it to evolve into an ID card," O'Rourke and Pearce will tell the Committee.

"It will adapt to this environment as surely as the cane toad adapted to tropical Australia."

Liberty says the legislation prohibiting the card's use as an ID card would be ineffective.

It says that, in attempting to prevent the use of the card as an ID card, the Government will be acting like King Canute.

“The convenience of the card as a universal means of identification will be as irresistible as the rising tide,” say O’Rourke and Pearce.

Liberty also attacks the Government for forcing legislation through the Parliament without a proper public debate on the proposed card.

It says the Government has announced the card would be introduced without debate, has kept secret critical parts of the report backing the card, rushed out legislation over the summer break and was now threatening the Senate Committee with the imminent award of contracts.

“The Government is treating the public and the Parliament with contempt over an issue of vital public importance,” O’Rourke and Pearce say.

They will call on the Senate Committee to stand up to the Government and insist on a proper debate of the merits of a national ID card.

“The consciences of Members of Parliament are all that stand between Australia and another blight more serious than the cane toad.”

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