

MEDIA RELEASE

Bikie Gangs and the Charter of Human Rights

Liberty Victoria dismissed as misleading and mischievous the opinion attributed to Victoria Police that they could not join in a national campaign against bikie gangs because of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Liberty President Michael Pearce SC said that, if accurately reported, the police statement smacked of excuse-making and could not be taken seriously. "Nothing in the Charter prevents the police from conducting investigations into people reasonably suspected of criminal activity. Membership of a bikie gang does not put people beyond the reach of the law," he said. He called on the police to release the contrary legal advice which they claim to hold.

Mr Pearce said the problem was probably one of police resources and that the police were doing the community a disservice if they were seeking to make the Charter of Human Rights a scapegoat for their internal problems.

Mr Pearce was also critical of the Herald-Sun for publicising the police statement without seeing the legal advice on which it was based or even calling for its release. "This is another Herald-Sun beat-up against the Charter," Mr Pearce said.

"The Herald-Sun runs these anti-Charter stories at every opportunity," he added, "but is happy to go into court and argue its own interests based on rights contained in the Charter. Perhaps they would be more interested in the Charter if it contained a right to hypocrisy."