Liberty

VICTORIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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MEDIA RELEASE

Senate called on to ban the listing of the Kurdish Workers Party

Liberty Victoria today urges the Senate to overturn the Attorney-General's decision to list the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a Terrorist Organisation.

The call is being made today as Greens Senator Bob Brown's motion of disallowance is debated this afternoon.

Brian Walters SC, President of Liberty Victoria, said the Senate – and particularly Labor senators - should be very aware of the implications of the listing.

"Frankly it undermines negotiations for peace."

"While the government acknowledges the PKK's initiation of negotiations for peace, this listing criminalizes any Australian dialogue with the PKK on solutions for the resolution of conflict," said Mr Walters.

He added that the listing was a departure from fundamental principles of criminal law and from Australia's international obligations under the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, most notably those obligations relating to freedom of association (Article 22.)

Mr Walters said there was no evidence that the PKK posed any threat to Australia's domestic national security.

"However for Australian Kurdish refugees who fled political persecution for their PKK allegiances, or who where imputed to be PKK sympathizers by the Turkish government, proscription presents specific dangers. They are open to prosecution for the same reasons they were granted asylum – supporting the PKK," he said. "A commitment to non-violence would be no defence."

Media inquiries: Brian Walters SC 0411 020 967

Note to editors: The PKK became Australia's 19th banned terrorist organisation when Attorney-General Philip Ruddock listed it late last year. A review of the move by parliament's joint intelligence committee subsequently supported the listing but called on the government to keep it under active consideration. Labor members of the committee, Kerr and Faulkner, provided a rare minority report which opposed the listing.