



MEDIA RELEASE! MEDIA RELEASE!

UN Human Rights Office asked to investigate protest laws
Monday 18th August 2014

A coalition of diverse community groups has today written to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights outlining their concerns at the proposed introduction of the *Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Bill 2014*. The groups have called on three Special Rapporteurs to investigate the incompatibility of the Bill with obligations under international human rights law.

According to Benedict Bartl, Policy Officer with Community Legal Centres Tasmania:

We are very concerned that this Bill does not comply with Australia's obligations under international human rights law. The introduction of punitive measures including mandatory sentencing for protesting will have a chilling effect on the freedom of speech and association and the right of peaceful assembly. Mandatory sentencing laws will take discretion away from the judiciary meaning that they are unable to consider the circumstances particular to the individual case.

The urgent appeal is addressed to Mrs Gabriela Knaul, the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Mr Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Mr David Kaye the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

According to Adam Gregory, Tasmanian Convenor of Australian Lawyers for Human Rights:

"The Bill violates international human rights contained in the International Covenants on 'Civil and Political Rights' and 'Economic, Social and Cultural Rights', both of which Australia has ratified. In particular, the Bill is inconsistent with our right to expression, assembly and association. The permitted restrictions of these rights under the Covenants do not apply to this Bill in its current form.

Furthermore, International Human Rights Law demands all laws be proportionate, reasonable and necessary, which the proposed laws are not. Protesters who do not comply with current laws already face significant fines and jail of up to six months.

We call on the Government recognise our international law obligations and withdraw this Bill.

Photo Opportunities Available

For a copy of the letter or for further Info: Benedict Bartl – 0417 032 832

Benedict Bartl and Adam Gregory will be available for media comment at 3:30p.m. at 166 Macquarie St, Hobart