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Commuters subjected to another police search operation at Central Station

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) is calling for an end to police searches of commuters at train stations after the Centre was alerted that 'privacy screens' had once again been erected at Central Station in a high foot traffic area at one of Australia's busiest train stations.

This is the second such search operation involving commuters and the use of privacy screens held at Central Station in the last two months. Search operations also took place at a number of other train stations across Sydney yesterday afternoon.

"Police are subjecting commuters to humiliating searches, when all they want to do is make their way home after a hard day's work," said solicitor Samatha Lee, the head of Redfern Legal Centre's police accountability practice.

"The 'privacy screens' are far from private. There is nothing private about being searched at one of Australia's busiest train stations. The public can see under and around the screens, and even a silhouette of those behind the screen," Ms Lee said.

RLC is calling for changes to NSW strip-search laws after figures reveal an almost 50% increase in such searches over the past four years.

Samantha Lee said that these practices are harmful, "Strip searches are an invasive and humiliating process. According to law, such searches are meant to be a last resort and not the first port of call. Children as young as ten can be legally strip searched in New South Wales."

Ms Lee further states, "The law is antiquated and harmful and it needs to change."

RLC is urging anyone who has been subjected to a strip search on a train station to immediately contact RLC or complain to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), which is the independent police watchdog investigating the use of strip searches by NSW Police.

On 16 May, RLC is holding a free panel discussion, "Does NSW Have a Strip Search Problem?". The discussion aims to inform the public about the operation of strip search laws in New South Wales.

The legal centre has also commissioned a report from UNSW Law to compare the operation of police strip search laws in NSW with other jurisdictions across Australia and internationally.

RLC has launched a campaign to change NSW strip-search laws: www.safeandsound.org.au

RLC police powers solicitor, Samantha Lee is available for interview. Contact Finn O'Keefe, RLC Communications Manager: 02 9698 7277 | 0424 548 019 | finn@rlc.org.au