

MEDIA RELEASE

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Strip Search Targets: Call to Audit the NSW Police Quota System

Redfern Legal Centre will write to the NSW Auditor-General requesting a special audit to examine if quotas are unduly influencing the number of stop and searches carried out by NSW police under the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act (2002)*.

The call comes as statistics reveal that NSW Police have stopped and searched people almost a-quarter-of-a-million times in the last financial year (2018-19) to meet quotas.

The statistics show that last financial year, NSW Police were operating under quotas which required officers to perform 241,632 personal searches, including strip search and 'frisk' searches, and a target of 106,307 move-on orders.

Samantha Lee, Head of the Police Accountability legal practice at Redfern Legal Centre states, "The use of targets may explain why the people of NSW have been subjected to a drastic rise in invasive, harmful and potentially unlawful strip searches.

"Strip searches should only be conducted where the necessary and urgent legal circumstances exist – not driven by arbitrary targets, or as part of a 'numbers game'," Ms Lee said.

"A quota can place police under enormous pressure to cut corners. This may cause the test of 'reasonable grounds' as set out in the legislation to be overlooked in order to meet an unreasonable quota."

"Quotas' or 'targets' create unnecessary tension between the public and law enforcement. Targets put frontline officers under enormous pressure, the temptation to cut corners become pervasive.

"If the public believes that searches are being made for reasons other than the goal of law enforcement, then their trust in the legitimacy of the system is substantially eroded."

"It is vital that this matter be referred to the NSW Auditor-General, because such targets could be eroding the rights of many citizens, by subjecting them to unnecessary and potentially unlawful strip searches," Ms Lee said.

In 2018, it was discovered a significant number of random breath tests conducted by Victoria Police in recent years have been fake, due to perverse incentives in key performance indicators.

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