

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Redfern Legal Centre calls on NSW Police to immediately release internal police document reportedly outlining breaches of strip-search laws**

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) is calling on NSW Police Commissioner Michael Fuller to release an internal police document that reportedly reveals that police are incorrectly applying strip-search laws. Redfern Legal Centre believes it is in the public interest that this report be released.

Yesterday, *The Sydney Morning Herald* published an article, 'NSW Police admits breaching strip-search laws,' revealing that in November 2018, NSW Police prepared an internal report which reportedly found that police have been applying the power to strip search inconsistently and incorrectly.

Samantha Lee, a solicitor who heads up the Police Accountability legal practice at Redfern Legal Centre states: "The public have a right to know if there has been an internal finding by police that strip-search laws are being incorrectly applied. RLC has many clients who have been subjected to potentially unlawful strip searches. There are potentially thousands of others who may have been subjected to humiliating, harmful and potentially unlawful searches.

"We would also like to know if the NSW Police Commissioner, or past or present Police Ministers were informed about the report findings and what actions were taken to ensure police did not overstep their strip-search powers."

Ms Lee further states, "It's not enough to just update education and training materials when police have reportedly admitted that the law itself is failing to provide rigorous and clear guidance to police. Legislative change is absolutely critical to ensuring clear, strong regulatory guidance."

RLC will also commence immediate action to seek access to the report via freedom of information laws and an urgent meeting with the NSW Police Minister, the Hon. David Elliott, to discuss critical legislative reform.

Mr George Newhouse, Director of the National Justice Project and Adjunct Professor of Law at Macquarie University is one of over 60 signatories to an open letter to the NSW Police Minister outlining concerns about current strip-search laws and calling for legislative change.

"The law is being abused in a discriminatory manner. Aboriginal people are being targeted unfairly as well as festival goers. It's time for solid legislative change," Mr Newhouse said.

RLC has commissioned a report into strip-search laws prepared by the University of New South Wales Law School. The report is due to be released soon. An open letter to the NSW Police Minister, facilitated by Redfern Legal Centre, can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/ssopenletter>

**Samantha Lee, head solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre's Police Accountability practice is available for comment. Contact:** Finn O'Keefe, RLC Communications Manager p: 0418491459 | e: [finn@rlc.org.au](mailto:finn@rlc.org.au)