

8 November 2019 | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Coroner finds strip searches are causing harm and calls for change to the law

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) is calling on the government to implement the strip search recommendations made today by the Deputy State Coroner, Harriet Grahame.

The Deputy State Coroner has found that strip searches are causing harm to young people and the law needs immediate reform.

She has recommended the following reform to strip search law: that strip searches in the field be limited to circumstances where there is a reasonable suspicion that the person has committed or is about to commit an offence of supply of a prohibited drug, or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the strip search is necessary to prevent an immediate risk to personal safety or to prevent the immediate loss or destruction of evidence; and that a positive indication from a drug detection dog is not sufficient to form “reasonable suspicion”, nor is the failure of a personal search to yield any prohibited substances.

Samantha Lee, Head of Police Accountability practice at Redfern Legal Centre, states, “We know strip searches are causing great harm to the community and now we have the Deputy State Coroner confirming that this invasive practice is having a devastating impact on young lives.”

The proposed changes recommended by the Deputy Coroner are far from radical, but merely reflect parliament’s original intent that such an invasive procedure be only utilised in the most exceptional of legal circumstances.”

“With the music festivals season fast approaching, its vital that strip search laws be changed to prevent further young people being subjected to these invasive searches.”

Recent data obtained by Redfern Legal Centre reveals that for a three-year period (2016-2017-2018-19) nearly 2,000 young women aged 25 and under have been strip searched. For a two-year period (2016-17 to 2017-18), young adults aged between 18 and 25 were subjected to 4,011 strip searches.

The Deputy State Coroner’s recommendations have been informed by the in-depth report into strip search laws prepared by Dr Michael Grewcock and Dr Vicki Sentas *Rethinking Strip Searches by NSW Police*, commissioned by RLC.

For further information, contact Samantha Lee, RLC Head of Police Accountability: 0418 491 459 | sam@rlc.org.au