



Media Release

Victims of police abuse let down by Brumby Government

Changes to the Act that regulates police, currently being debated in Parliament, will fail the victims of alleged police misconduct including the family of Tyler Cassidy and Corinna Horvath.

"It is essential that Parliament holds a full public inquiry into changes to the Police Regulations Act and the investigation by police of allegations of deaths, assaults and other human rights abuse by police members. Because the Victorian Government refuses to change the way that police are investigated, civil action is one of the only ways for a victim to get justice. Now the government is moving to make that impossible." Said Tamar Hopkins, Principal Solicitor at Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre.

FKCLC has repeatedly called on the Government to clean up the system for investigating police complaints, as in the vast majority of cases police investigate allegations against police.

"The Office of Police Integrity (OPI) says that police investigating police involved in deaths is a serious public concern.* Why won't the government even listen to its own watch dog?"

"Tyler Cassidy's shooting by police is being investigated by Victoria Police members. How can the public have any confidence in this system? Only an open inquiry will lead to a proper police complaints system in this state."

"In Northern Ireland the Police Ombudsman independently investigates all complaints about police assault and deaths in custody. This is the model we need for Victoria."

"Changes to the Act mean that the State of Victoria can continue to refuse to compensate the victims of police who have engaged in serious and willful misconduct." Ms Hopkins said

"Take the Corinna Hovarth case; the amendments to the Bill continue

this injustice." Corinna Hovarth who has now taken her case to the United Nations, was beaten unconscious by police who were trespassing in her house. The State refuses compensate her for the brutal acts of its trained, paid, armed and uniformed police members.

The amendments will also ensure that victims of police misconduct files cannot use complaint investigation reports to assist their civil cases. Police lawyers, on the other hand will have full access to these investigation reports. As a result, victims who make complaints to the police will face an unequal contest if they take civil action against police.

With the OPI only investigating 3.2% of cases it receives, civil litigation is frequently the only way a person who has been assaulted by police can get their case fairly, fully and independently examined.

"Any restrictions on access to documents for victims, makes it virtually impossible for victims of police misconduct to get a fair hearing. Why would you bother complaining about police misconduct from now on?" Ms Hopkins said.

*OPI Annual Report 2009

**For further comment contact Tamar Hopkins on
9376 4355
0400 990 663**

☞ **Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.**

Online Donations: www.ourcommunity.com.au/fkclc

Webpage: www.communitylaw.org.au