

Fr Chris Riley demands defeat of WA legislation citing breaches of The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Legislation introduced this week to the Upper House of the Western Australian Parliament will grant the Government the power to use the Internet to **name** and shame child offenders as young as 14 years. Father Chris Riley, CEO and Founder of the charity Youth Off The Streets, has called for the defeat of this legislation.

“The Western Australian Government should hang their head in shame for announcing such draconian and oppressive strategies that fly in the face of all research and good practice,” said Father Riley who has been recognised for his 35 years of experience working with homeless and disadvantaged youth.

“Naming and shaming young people does nothing to deter them from criminal activity. In fact, naming young people caters to an immature thirst for notoriety. Naming and shaming people is linked to an increase in violence. Furthermore, allowing public access to a young person’s record leaves them vulnerable to revenge attack,” he said.

Father Riley is concerned that the Western Australian Government should contemplate treating their children any differently from those in the rest of Australia. He is outraged by legislation that will see children identified for crimes on public record via the Internet.

“The identification of young people linked to crime is an insidious breach of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory,” he continued.

“This legislation must be defeated by the Upper House as it is in direct contravention of Articles 3, 4, 8, 17, 19, 36, 37 and 40. If the Western Australian Parliament passes this legislation, it will be in blatant disregard for the Australian Human Rights Commission Act and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.”

For example, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 40 section (1) states: *States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society. (A child is stipulated here as being under the age of 18.)*

Father Riley also expressed concern that this legislation targets Indigenous youth:

“In Western Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths aged 10 to 17 are 45 times more likely to be in detention on an average day than other children.* If we set up a system that allows for their childhood actions to be recorded for posterity, what hope will there be for these young people to turn their lives around, gain employment and make a positive contribution?”

“This legislation must be defeated. All members of the Upper House must discredit this legislation naming it as discriminatory, racist and a deliberate disregard for basic human rights.”

If the legislation is passed, Father Riley has vowed to report the breaches to the United Nations Human Rights Commission on behalf of Western Australia’s youth.

Father Chris Riley was awarded the 2009 Lions Clubs International Humanitarian Award and the 2006 Human Rights Medal from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Father Riley is available for interview. For any media request, please contact:

Youth Off The Streets: Email: Inam@youthoffthestreets.com.au / Ph: 9330 3543 / M: 0412 377 217