



MEDIA RELEASE

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New report shows over 80,000 strip searches conducted in 10 years, with more than 85% finding nothing.

The report titled '**The Use of Strip Searches & Drug Dogs in NSW**', based on 10 years of police data from 2014 to 2023, was released today by Harm Reduction Australia and Redfern Legal Centre.

The report analysing ten years of previously unreleased data, shows the following:

- Between **2014 and 2023**, NSW Police reported conducting **82,471** strip searches.
- Illicit substances were found in only **11,136 (13.5%)** cases with **71,335 (86.5%)** strip searches finding nothing.
- **6,716 or 8.14%** of these searches were conducted because of a positive indication from a drug dog.
- However, of these **6,716** individuals strip searched, only **2,713 or 40.4%** were found to have any illicit substances, with the vast majority being minor drug possession.

In analysing the data available, the report's authors detail clear recommendations for the NSW Government and NSW Police:

1. End the use of strip searches conducted based on suspicion of minor drug possession.
2. End all strip searches of children under 18 years of age.
3. Cease the use of drug dogs at festivals, events and venues.
4. Mandate the offer of diversion alternatives to all persons caught with personal use amounts of any illicit drug.
5. Disclose the annual financial and personnel costs incurred by NSW Police in maintaining and deploying the drug detection dogs including any impact on community safety and wellbeing.
6. Publicly release annual data on the number and outcomes of strip searches conducted each year
7. Introduce evidence-based drug reforms and expand harm reduction programs as a matter of urgency.

Samantha Lee, supervising solicitor, Redfern Legal Centre, says:

“The significant harm caused by strip searches is not justified. Most searches yield nothing, and when something is found, it is often only a small quantity of drugs for personal use.

Not only does the end not justify the means, but the process also inflicts ongoing trauma on many young people and children. This violating practice needs to stop. It is a recommendation within the NSW Drug Summit report, yet still this practice continues.”

Gino Vumbaca, President of Harm Reduction Australia thanked the NSW Greens for their determined pursuit of the data in the NSW Parliament and called on the NSW Government to fully implement the recommendations of the report.

Mr Vumbaca added:

“Not only is there is little to no evidence to support the continuation of the strip-searching program, but there is also now a growing body of evidence clearly demonstrating the horrendous level of pain and suffering it inflicts on some of our most vulnerable young people. The Premier and Police Minister need to put a stop to this failed program immediately and reinvest the significant resources of this program into services that help the community.”

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