
The MHLEPQ calls on implementation of OPCAT

The MHLEPQ is concerned that the recent federal budget did not include a commitment to extending funding to the States to meet Australia's commitments under the Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). Under the protocol Australia must establish a National Preventative Mechanism and facilitate inspections of detention facilities by UN experts and investigators. It appears the Government's recent budget does not include any allocation for this important work. It is only a few years ago that Queensland embarrassed Australia internationally when the UN first suspended and then later cancelled their visit to Australia because they were refused access to Queensland mental health facilities. Despite inspecting facilities in more than 60 countries the UN have only ever taken the decision to cancel a visit due to lack of cooperation once. Queensland at this time put Australia in the good company of Rwanda being the second country to have a visit cancelled.

The OPCAT protocol is an important international tool to prevent torture and unlawful detention. Australia signed the convention 15 years ago, ratified the convention 7 years ago and have been in breach of the convention ever since. Under OPCAT protocols the UN must have access to inspect all centres of detention. Within this definition are many mental health facilities and hence a functioning OPCAT process is of core interest of MHLEPQ members.

The **MHLEPQ calls on the Federal** as well as **State Governments** to ensure the **OPCAT processes are fully funded** and that **OPCAT inspectors have full access to all places of detention.**