

Human Rights Commission

THE RIGHT OF PEACEFUL PROTEST SEMINAR

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PAPERS

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The Occasional Paper Series

This is the fourteenth in the Human Rights Commission's Occasional Papers series. The individual papers which make up this volume were prepared for a seminar on the right of peaceful protest held at University House, the Australian National University, Canberra, on 3-4 July 1986.

Occasional Papers are issued by the Commission from time to time to deal in depth with a particular problem or subject. Their overall objective is to promote greater awareness and public discussion of human rights.

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FOREWORD

Nineteen eighty-six is the International Year of Peace.: In accordance with the theme, the Human Rights Commission Selected as one focus for its activities the right of peaceful protest. Peaceful protest is a major mechanism for the attainment and maintenance of peace. It enables ordinary men and women to draw to public attention issues they believe to be important, thereby helping to bring about social and political change by peaceful means.

With the support of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the International Year of Peace Secretariat of the Department of Foreign Affairs, whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged, the Commission arranged a seminar on 3 and 4 July, on the right of peaceful protest. The seminar was designed to investigate and clarify the conditions under which peaceful protest can and does take place, and restrictions imposed upon it, the problems associated with it and the ways it can be made effective. It was intended not as a venue for statements on behalf of particular causes but rather as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the importance of the right of peaceful protest in modern society and the general factors affecting it.

The papers given at the seminar are reproduced in this volume. They relate to a number of major aspects of the right of peaceful protest, including: media reporting of protest activity; the organisation of protest as a political strategy; Government responses to protest; the problems of policing protest; the right of peaceful protest in international law and Australia's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; notification or authorisation requirements for public assemblies; issues arising in relation to the protection of diplomatic personnel and premises; and picketing as a form of protest activity. Also included are brief reports from the workshop groups that considered these topics. An appendix provides some basic statistical information concerning the frequency of public protests in 1983 in Australia, the issues

on which protests were made, the size of the protest groups, **the** people protesting, and the institutions or phenomena against which the protests were directed.

The Commission wishes to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs for the financial support which made the seminar possible. It also extends special thanks to Mr Robin Handley of the University of Wollongong, who played a major role in the development of the peaceful protest project from its inception and did much of the organising for the seminar. To the speakers the Commission expresses its gratitude for the excellent papers they presented, and to the other participants for the active role they played in making the seminar a particularly fruitful and stimulating occasion.

Peter Bailey

Deputy Chairman
28 October 1986