

Media Release

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Protecting Your Rights On Track

A new community law group launched its project today in response to the Government's introduction of armed train station Protective Services Officers (PSOs) which it describes as a flawed and risky experiment that needs to be reconsidered. The group, Your Rights on Track led by Community Legal Centres and Smart Justice for Young People, representing over 30 legal, community and youth welfare organisations says there are real community safety concerns about the armed guards who have similar powers to police but have less training and supervision.

'Giving semi-automatic guns to under-trained, newly minted recruits and placing them without close supervision on the coalface of interaction with people affected by mental illness and alcohol and drugs is a recipe for yet another fatal shooting' says Michelle McDonnell, the group's spokesperson. 'It will be safer for everyone, including the guards themselves, if their guns are removed'.

The group is urging the Government at the very least to scale back the PSO roll out by only putting PSOs on stations with known crime problems. 'We know that in 2009 there were 116 stations with no assaults reported so it's simply a waste of our taxpayer funds for armed guards to sit around every night on stations like these where no crime occurs', says Ms McDonnell. 'We want a safer train system but this experiment is not the right way to go about it. This money could be used far more effectively on other crime prevention initiatives that work such as reducing child neglect, improving drug and alcohol services and keeping at-risk youth in school'.

Your Rights on Track is aimed at supporting commuters who may be affected by the PSO roll out. The group is taking the lead by providing information to train travellers about PSO powers and their rights as commuters. 'We want to make sure that people know where they stand in relation to these new armed guards and that if anyone has a complaint they can access legal help', says Ms McDonnell. 'We're inviting people to visit our Facebook page Your Rights on Track for more information'.

The project will monitor the introduction of PSOs, provide feedback to the Government and Victoria Police, and keep the media and the general community informed of any issues that arise with the PSO roll out.

Further information:

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www.facebook.com/PSO.YourRightsOnTrack

www.smartjustice.org.au

Know your rights with Protective Services Officers