**2013 Election and Human Rights**

Finally human rights were mentioned in this election campaign. The Shadow Attorney General George Brandis promised to institute an audit of federal legislation that erodes traditional civil and political freedoms. The audit is to be undertaken by the Australian Law Reform Commission.

The Attorney General Dreyfus, on the other hand, is committed to reintroduction of flawed consolidation of anti-discrimination laws. The past draft legislation that proposed to consolidate five anti-discrimination laws was so confused it had to be withdrawn. The confusion facing human rights policy has been created by Labor's attempt to redefine human rights to suit its ideological priorities. Anti-discrimination and egalitarian measures have been broadened and civil liberties neglected. This approach has been illustrated, for example, by Labor's shocking attitude towards the media and freedom of expression.

 A Liberal government needs to restore the balance between civil liberties and egalitarian rights. It was heartening to hear Senator Brandis's promising to institute an audit. But let’s not forget his earlier promise to create a new position of "freedom commissioner" to focus on civil liberties and freedoms, especially on freedom of expression. The welcomed alternative approach would be simply to restore the position of Human Rights Commissioner which Labor has dismantled on quiet by simply not reappointing the Human Rights Commissioner. However, there is still legislation on the books enabling Senator Brandis to do so immediately, if elected. Regretfully, the Australian Human Rights Commission supported Labor’s de-facto abolition of Human Rights Commissioner position with its the President usurping the Commissioner’s title on many occasions.

Further, to restore the balance and advance civil liberties, the HR Commissioner’s provision needs to be provided powers that will enable the Commissioner to discharge his/her responsibilities. Such powers would require the enactment of legislation to incorporate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into Australian law; just as we did in the past with international anti-discrimination instruments.