ATTORNEY-GENERAL

INCREASED TRANSPARENCY IN PLACES OF DETENTION

22 August 2013

The Northern Territory Government today will move to introduce new legislation that would further increase transparency in our places of detention by allowing the United Nations to visit and inspect at any time.

Attorney-General John Elferink said that if passed through Parliament, the Monitoring of Places of Detention Bill will provide the Commonwealth with the necessary support to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

“OPCAT aims to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” Mr Elferink said.

“The convention allows the United Nations to access information, interview detainees and gain access to places of detention including correctional and detention centres, police stations, court cells and hospitals.

“The Country Liberals Government is committed to increasing transparency and accountability and this, of course, extends to institutions where people may be involuntarily deprived of their liberty.

“Locations used by the Northern Territory Government to hold detainees should have the appropriate standards of security, safety, good order and personal privacy,” Mr Elferink said.

The Commonwealth must have the support of all states and territories to ratify the convention, whereby they must agree to unrestricted access to places of detention.

Once the Commonwealth has ratified the convention, the Northern Territory Government will immediately be required to adhere to obligations outlined in OPCAT.

Mr Elferink said consultation has been welcomed on the Bill with no major issues raised during the process.

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