



# New South Wales Bar Association

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## World Youth Day regulations undermine our basic rights

The president of the New South Wales Bar Association, Anna Katzmann SC, has condemned the Iemma government's World Youth Day regulations as a direct affront to freedom of speech and assembly.

'To make something that causes inconvenience to people the basis for a criminal offence is both unnecessary and repugnant.

'It is difficult to understand the need for, let alone the wisdom of, such a law', said Ms Katzmann.

Creating a criminal offence by regulation bypasses the same level of parliamentary and public scrutiny that would be given to an Act of parliament.

'Who required this? Why are the existing laws good enough to regulate conduct at, say, the Mardi Gras parade or the Rugby World Cup, but not on this occasion?' Ms Katzmann said.

To make matters worse, the terms of the regulation are vague, its operation uncertain and it does not at least require the conduct to be disorderly or insulting.

In this last respect it is in stark contrast with existing laws governing crowd behaviour at Mount Panorama or the Sydney Cricket Ground.

'The mere presence in the vicinity of a person wearing the apparel or insignia of another religion might be annoying or inconvenient to a participant in a World Youth Day event. So, too, the presence of a protestor.

'If I were to wear a T-shirt proclaiming that "World Youth Day is a waste of public money" and refuse to remove it when an officer of the Rural Fire Service asks me to, I would commit a criminal offence. How ridiculous is that?

'Why should participants in a World Youth Day event be the arbiters of good taste and behaviour and why should their sensitivities or those of a police officer, an SES member or a member of the Rural Fire Service dictate the behaviour of other, law abiding members of the public?' Ms Katzmann concluded.

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