

# BAN STRIP SEARCHES

Strip searches represent a serious breach of human rights and contravene Australia's ratification of the [Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture \(OPCAT\)](#).



- Strip searches cause unnecessary distress and infringe upon the dignity of the individual. They result in **degradation, humiliation and victimisation** of female prisoners. Most women in Australian prisons have experienced **abuse prior to their incarceration** and strip searching may trigger these traumatic experiences.
- The practice of strip searching is an abuse of power of the state over vulnerable people. Authorities are replicating dynamics of coercion and control as **strip searching is used as a form of extra judicial punishment through sexual humiliation.**

In her 2020 report, The NSW Inspector of Custodial Services, Fiona Rafter, found a regime of **frequent and routine strip searches** at the Mary Wade Correctional Centre. The inspection team found:

- That strip searches are being performed after women leave and return to the correctional centre, and after the conclusion of contact and non-contact visits.
- **There is no empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of strip-searches in finding contraband.** For example, no contraband was identified by way of strip searching after visits between 22 October 2018 and 22 October 2019.
- Corrective Services NSW policy only requires strip searches to be recorded centrally when contraband is found. Therefore **there is no accurate measurement of the number of strip searches undertaken inside the centre.**
- Mary Wade is a remand centre. The majority of the women it houses have yet to be convicted of the crime for which they're being detained.

In the past year, **NSW Police have strip searched 96 children**, some as young as 11. **21% of children strip searched were Indigenous.** Indigenous children of ALL AGES are disproportionately targeted for strip searches.

From 2016-2019 more than **100 girls** were subjected to strip searches, including two **12 year olds**. During the same period, more than **300 boys**, including one as young as 11 years old, were strip searched.

**The capacity for this punishment to occur is widespread due to the discretionary powers held by police.** In the context of music festivals, investigation by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) **uncovered significant numbers of unlawful searches.**

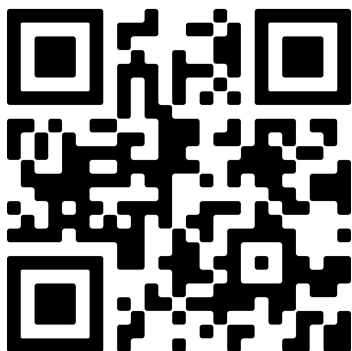
During October 2020, dozens of women were taken off a Sydney bound plane in Qatar and invasively strip searched. The Federal Labor Shadow Minister Joel Fitzgibbon said action taken by Qatari officials **“effectively amounts to state-sanctioned sexual assault”**. **Foreign Minister Marise Payne** described these searches as **“a grossly disturbing, offensive, concerning set of events”**.

**Why does Australia still accept this abusive practice in our prisons, in our music festivals and on our streets?**

***We demand the following:***

1. That routine strip searching of women prisoners is brought to an end.
2. Corrective services apologise and compensates women they have assailed.
3. The state government ends the wide-spread strip searching practices by police in custody, music festivals, and on the streets.
4. Body scanners are introduced to replace invasive strip searches.

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Ban Strip Search NSW  
Coalition

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