



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 07:00, 29th August , 2008

ATO takes Charity Witch Hunt to the Federal Court

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) has again attacked the right of charities to free speech by appealing an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) ruling to reinstate AID/WATCH's charity status.

The appeal comes after the AAT decided last month to overturn an ATO decision made in 2006 that AID/WATCH could not be a charity because it sought to promote a particular point of view.

Director of AID/WATCH, Ms. Lara Daley, said "The AAT conclusively showed that charities such as AID/WATCH have a right to voice their perspective, but the ATO seems determined to continue the Howard government's efforts to silence charities."

"The AAT's ruling brought Australian charity law into the 21st century but the ATO wants to send it back to the 17th century again" said Ms. Daley.

The AAT's ruling last month was celebrated by community organisations across Australia as an important victory for the right of charities to advocate in the public interest.

Legal counsel for AID/WATCH, Ms Anne Gooley commented that "the ruling gave confidence to the charitable sector that they could criticise the government without being worried that they would lose their charity status".

Ms. Daley expressed disappointment at the ATO decision to appeal. He commented that "The ATO's decision to take this to the Federal court is not only a waste of tax payers money, it's a direct challenge to free speech."

AID/WATCH will write to the Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan today to ask him to intervene on AID/WATCH's behalf.

"During his time in opposition Mr. Swan was vocal in his opposition to the Howard government's attack on charities. AID/WATCH will be asking the Treasurer to fulfill the ALPs election commitment of protecting charities right to advocate for those they represent, even when this differs from government policy" said Ms. Daley.

AID/WATCH will continue to be represented on a pro bono basis by Maurice Blackburn Principal Anne Gooley.

For Comment: Ms. Lara Daley, AID/WATCH Director 0411 584 012
Ms. Anne Gooley, Maurice Blackburn Principal 0407 079 862

ABN: 97 491 078 647,

19 Eve St, Erskineville, NSW 2043

PHONE (+61) (02) 9557 8944 FAX (+61) (02) 9557 9822 EMAIL aidwatch@aidwatch.org.au

All donations to AID/WATCH of \$2 or more are tax deductible

www.aidwatch.org.au