

## **MEDIA RELEASE 30 MAY 2002**

### **RESTRAINT NEEDED IN GIVING POWERS TO INSPECTORS**

The Chairman of the bipartisan Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee, Mr Murray Thompson today tabled in the Legislative Assembly its Report on *Powers of Entry, Search, Seizure and Questioning by Authorised Persons*.

“We looked at the powers of inspectors in over 120 Victorian Acts and found there was enormous variety and indeed inconsistency in the way powers were described and applied”, said Murray Thompson.

“We have established a set of basic principles that should apply to the powers of inspectors.”

The Law Reform Committee said that the starting point should be that restrictions on civil liberties and individual and commercial activity should be as limited as possible.

“We recommended that great restraint should be exercised in giving inspectors powers, especially private inspectors”, said Murray Thompson.

“We also found that there were too few provisions in current acts to safeguard citizens’ rights and ensure transparency and accountability.”

The Committee also found that more work needs to be done on the selection and training of inspectors, complaints mechanisms, and consistent standards between enforcement agencies.

The most contentious issue dealt with by the Committee was the powers of transport inspectors on the now privatised system.

“We found that the key issue was to reform the ticketing system so that it operated to make the use of the powers of detention and arrest by private inspectors a rarity rather than a common occurrence”, said Murray Thompson.

“While supporting the powers of inspectors to ensure the integrity of the public transport system, we recommended that significant additional safeguards be imposed on the use of their powers.”

Safeguards recommended include: amendments to the *Transport Act 1983* to clearly delineate when the powers can be used; significant additional mandatory training of inspectors; and the establishment of a separate public transport unit within the Victorian Ombudsman’s Office.

**For further information contact: Mr Murray Thompson, Chairman 9598 2688  
Ms Merrin Mason, Executive Officer 9651 3642**