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# Police program concern



AUSTRALIAN human rights lawyers are scathing of a NSW policing program found to be disproportionately targeting young people as young as 10 along with Aboriginal youth.

A report prepared by the Youth Justice Coalition uncovered half of the total targets of NSW Police's Suspect Target Management Program (STMP) were under 25, while 44% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The report claims the program allows police to place people, including minors and those never found guilty of an offence, on a list alongside known offenders, all of whom are then targeted for intensive policing in a bid to deter future criminal activity.

Police assess a person's future risk of offending and put them into a category of extreme, high, medium or low risk. Those on the STMP are singled out for attention, including being repeatedly detained and searched.

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) vice president Kerry Weste says the program punishes people based on the assumption they may commit a crime.

"Once placed on this list a person is subjected to intensive policing practices such as being repeatedly stopped on the street and searched and having police officers regularly visit their home to request that they present," she said in a statement.

"Intensively policing people who have never been convicted of any offence based on secretive algorithms is inconsistent with fundamental human rights and rule of law principles such as the presumption of innocence."

## Lack of transparency

ALHR also criticised the program's lack of transparency and governing legislation to hold it accountable.

"Moreover, persons subjected to the program are prevented from accessing the reasons for their inclusion or information as to how they can ever be removed from it," Ms Weste said.

The group has called on the NSW Government to find a more "responsible alternative".

However, a NSW Police spokesperson defended the program, claiming that it is targeted at recidivist criminal offenders to prevent them from committing crimes.

"A thorough risk management framework is used to ensure the NSW Police Force is targeting the right people at the right times to reduce violence and crime in the community," NSW Police said in a statement.

"While deliberately engaged by police, STMP nominees are treated with respect and tolerance, but they are reminded that the community will not tolerate criminal behaviour." – AAP