

The Shaggy Dog Story.... So Far

The Use of police sniffer dogs continues to occur around the streets, bars and venues of Sydney. This inappropriate use of police power at public expense searches huge numbers of people without reason or warrant. Some activities involve the unlawful detention of patrons to facilitate the dog search. There are thousands of shaggy dog stories in the city. Here are a few of them...

Man in Bar witnesses Dog search, patrons abused by police.

A worker in an inner city bar thought the woman with dark glasses and a dog must have been blind. The men that she was with looked well dressed for a night on the town. It only became apparent that it was a police drug dog when some women started to pat the pouch and it began to jump up on them and their male companions. The police approached the people and showed their badges, Ordered them to turn out their pockets and frisked them vigously. While the frisking was going on the police were calling to the men " Had a few Cones Have Ya? Like an 'E' Do Ya? When they answered "No" to these accusations the policeman concerned replied "Bullshit you don't!"

The police searched the patrons thoroughly, two police searching each person, their bags and cigarette packets. Even after finding nothing they insisted on taking their names.

So much for being innocent till proven guilty!

Searched by Police after patting a puppy!

A man went with his employers to a suburban bar for a Friday afternoon drink. You know how these things work, a chance to chill, talk frankly with the bosses and socialise outside the work environment. Just outside the pub this chap saw a dog ... just like his... he called the dog over and patted it. He was then approached by two plain clothes police who asked him to turn out his pockets. Having nothing they then asked to search his bag. When they still found nothing they said, loud enough so that the bosses could over hear that the bag was probably used to transport illicit drugs.

Now his employers think he some kind of drug kingpin and he has been severely embarrassed in front of them and accused without evidence.

This man should probably refused the search, had his objection to the search noted if the search was to continue.

Nursing a grudge.

A nurse on her way home from work to her new home was stopped on the train platform and searched. They consented to the search because they had no concerns, nothing was found. Now they feel that all their new neighbours and the local pharmacist and shopkeepers have witnessed this and that their reputation has been tarnished.

Locked in the Pub with no escape

People detained in bar while sniffer dogs used to search everyone on premises. Among other places this has occurred at the Oxford Hotel Newtown, the Exchange Hotel Oxford Street and the Green Square Hotel Zetland. In cases like this the police block the entrances and exits to a bar and then either take the sniffer dog through the bar or ask everyone to file out past the dog.

The police can only detain people if they have a reason. They can only search people if they have an objective reason to believe that they will find proof of an offence. In these situations .the people in the bar could complain that they were illegally detained. Everyone in the bar has been searched by the dog and some searched further. It would be perfectly reasonable to say that these searches are not based on reasonable grounds. Being in a bar even a dark, dingy, bad taste or gay bar is legal in Australia. Well it was last time I looked.

Don't expect your friendly bar owner to refuse police entry to protect patrons. They could loose their liquor license for not cooperating with the police so

they are between a rock and a hard place.

Three searched in cyber cafe

The police enter a cyber café in the suburbs on a warm winter weekday afternoon. Three patrons are dragged out and searched on the street. Nothing is found. The patrons work and liberty was disrupted and they each left soon after. The Cyber cafe lost business and the people lost their peace and liberty. Even people who were not searched left the café soon after because of their feelings of discomfort

In this case the owner could oppose the entry of police, normally they don't have a right to come onto a premises without an invitation or a warrant. This unwarranted disruption to people's peaceful business is completely objectionable.

What they don't tell you in the tourist brochures.

An international visitor was stopped in a park by some police with a dog. They searched his clothes, his bag s even his shoes. They were not very polite even though the traveller cooperated fully. Now he says : " They don't tell you in the tourist brochures that Sydney is in a Police State!"

People should let us know their experiences with police sniffer dogs both so we can collate reports and assist with complaints. If people wish to bring complaints, if they feel they have been inappropriately treated by police, that they have been unlawfully detained or that they have been searched without there being reasonable grounds they can contact Redfern Legal Centre on 9698 7277, www.rlc.org.au or the Council for Civil Liberties on www.nswccl.org.au

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