



We welcome letters to the editor of no more than 400 words.

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AUSTRALIA DAY TO REMEMBER



Australia Day 2011 reminded me why Australia is still a lucky country and why my dad put me on a boat in 1978 to escape from communist Vietnam.

It would not be an easy decision for any parent to put their child on a small boat and hope or pray that they would see that child again and that that child would make it to Australia.

And why would any parent in their right mind do such a thing to their child? Personal liberty, freedom and an opportunity to live without fear are just a few valid reasons. Now

that I have been in Australia for a few years, procedural fairness and freedom of association are right up there with the other reasons.

In recent federal elections and the 2010 Victorian election campaign, "law and order" and "asylum seekers" were hot topics. By playing fear into our minds, certain politicians and authorities have made it an art in passing legislation that has been chipping away at our civil liberty. As learned people, we let these politicians and authorities go too far.

For example, last October an experienced barrister and I took my 16-year-old work experience student to observe the "terrorism trial". The student was not allowed to enter the courtroom simply because she did not have photographic identification with her. You do not think that there is a problem? Please check your pulse. You may be dead.

If personal liberty was not so important, [Victorian Supreme Court] Justice [Kevin] Bell would not have observed that "nothing tears to shreds more completely the whole idea of the rule of law than unlawfully restraining the personal liberty of the individual".

We are learned people, guardians of this country's rights. Those rights include, but are not limited to, personal liberty, the right of association, procedural fairness, and freedom of speech. Do not leave it just to the High Court to do our work; we know not many cases make it to that Court.

Remember our rights (or what's left of them) and speak out against those politicians and authorities who want to continue to chip away at them.

Do so even if it might cost you a spot on the bench. If you remain silent, one day you may have to put your child on a little boat to make an escape.

JEFF TRAN
SOLICITOR, COOLABAH LAW CHAMBERS

For providing the letter of the month, Jeff Tran has won a \$50 book voucher from the LIV bookshop, redeemable for the next 12 months.

LJ

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