

# the impossibility of torture and democracy

**MONDAY 5 NOV 07 @ 6PM**  
**GEOGRAPHY LECTURE THEATRE 1, UWA**

## **Professor Jenny Hocking**

National Centre For Australian Studies, Monash University

Since the events of 11 September 2001, liberal democracies around the world, including Australia, have introduced unprecedented domestic counter-terrorism measures that have fundamentally changed the democratic state. Traditional aspects long considered essential in a liberal democracy – the rule of law, equality before the law, freedom of political association and freedom of speech - have been severely compromised if not irrevocably damaged by measures intended to protect the state from terrorist threats. Arguments for the contraction of human rights and political freedoms are typically invoked during a security crisis such as the 'war on terror'.

In this provocative talk Professor Hocking traces the recent evolution, from the insistence that human rights be recognized as genuinely universal and fundamental, as neither divisible, tradeable nor contingent, to the resurgence of counter-terrorism measures that include the repudiation of human and political rights once considered unassailable. Torture and detention without trial have historically been seen as the hallmarks of authoritarian states, as fearful expressions of a lawless and uncontrolled state power and hence as entirely incompatible with democracy. The acceptance of torture not only reflects the end of the effective rule of law and the advent of unfettered state control, but it also marks the impossibility of any continued notion of the democratic state.

**Professor Jenny Hocking is Research Professor and Director of Research with the School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences at Monash University. She is a previous Australian Research Council QEII Research Fellow, a former Harold White Fellow and is a current recipient of an ARC Linkage grant to write a biography of the former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Professor Hocking's book *Beyond Terrorism: the Development of the Australian Security State* (1994) was the first Australian work to identify the significance of counter-terrorism for contemporary democracies. Her recent books include *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-Terrorism and the Threat to Democracy* (2004) and *Counter-Terrorism and the Post-Democratic State* (2007, edited with Colleen Lewis). Professor Hocking has also made submissions to parliamentary and policy inquiries concerned with counter-terrorism and human rights in Australia.**

The Institute of Advanced Studies will host a Postgraduate Seminar with Jenny Hocking on **Tuesday 6 November 2007**. All interested students from Perth universities are invited to attend, as well as academics and those working in relevant areas.

**Registration is essential**, please visit <http://www.ias.uwa.edu.au/seminars/postgrad07> for further information.

### **All Welcome. No RSVP required.**

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