

## **Rights Bill urged to thwart violations**

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3

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Australia should have a Bill of rights to prevent human-right violations such as those suffered by David Hicks and Mohamed Haneef, a former ACT Supreme Court judge said yesterday. Speaking at an ACT Law Week lecture, Ken Crispin, QC, said Australians could not always trust governments and politicians to do the best by its citizens, and a Bill of rights would act as a safeguard. "We have also seen the former Commonwealth government maintain that it was acceptable for an Australian citizen to be held in a foreign concentration camp without trial and without charge for six years," Dr Crispin said, referring to the ordeal of convicted Taliban supporter Mr Hicks.

"I never imagined that I would hear an Australian government accept that our liberty should be terminated if an American soldier thought we must have done something wrong, even if unable to articulate what it might have been." Dr Crispin, who retired from the bench last October, said the ACT's Human Rights Act had not resulted in a flood of human- rights-based litigation, or judges usurping the role of the legislature, which were arguments often raised in opposition to a federal Bill of rights. He said certain human rights should be entrenched without concern about what future generations might think. Dr Crispin highlighted the case of Indian doctor Mohamed Haneef, who was detained last year without charge for 12 days on suspicion of aiding the terrorists involved in the Glasgow International Airport attack. "In a modern, democratic society, people may assume that only terrorists or criminals need fear incursions into their rights, though Dr Haneef might wish to debate such an assumption." Dr Crispin said after the lecture that he was writing a book about the erosion of justice in Western societies.