

Speech by IPAN-SA convener Derek Burke at the support rally before Richard Boyle's appeal hearing August 9 in Adelaide

In Australia, we are told that we live in a democracy where our rights and liberties are protected.

However, the current persecution and prosecution of whistleblowers has put a lie to that claim.

Richard Boyle should not be dragged before the courts for divulging the Australian Tax Office's unfair and unethical debt recovery practices. It is an outrage!

Government and corporate corruption and malfeasance is just as bad here in Australia as our media likes to regularly reveal in Russia and China.

Richard is facing 24 charges with the possibility of many years in prison if found guilty of doing the right thing and exposing the truth!

In fact, he should be receiving an Order of Australia award for selflessly revealing unscrupulous misconduct in the ATO.

Because I'm representing IPAN, I want to digress a little and make links with the issue of war and peace with another whistleblower case.

That of Major David McBride, who publicly exposed war crimes in Afghanistan.

Our federal authorities have covered up Australian war crimes in this country that we know about.

We have David McBride and other brave Australian soldiers to thank for courageously blowing the whistle on atrocities committed by some of our troops.

Resulting in the spectacular judgement of Justice Anthony Besanko, who found that Ben Roberts-Smith had "broken the moral and legal rules of military engagement and is therefore a criminal".

The judge found that four murder allegations against Roberts-Smith had been proven.

Prior to this court case, Australia's military authorities didn't want to know anything about their much promoted hero's villainous behaviour.

Like Richard, David McBride has been charged and dragged through the courts for exposing the truth.

David McBride has been subject in his hearings to bogus 'national security' restrictions and secrecy as Bernard Collaery and Witness K were.

When you are told you cannot use your witnesses because of 'national security', the legal system is going to make sure you will be convicted.

My worry is that this same criminal behaviour will lead our country to war again and the possibility of more war crimes.

Likewise Richard also faces a Wall of indifference, indeed enmity.

When Richard's public interest disclosure defence failed and the court ruled against his whistleblower status it demonstrates the hollowness of the Public Interest Disclosure Act. It tells us that the legal system actually protects the powerful not those who have a conviction about what is right and wrong.

Richard Boyle is not a criminal, he is a hero. We should maintain our rage at the injustice he is facing and tell his story wherever we can.

There is something very wrong with our country's practice of governance and legal redress when it is a crime to report a crime.

Every right-thinking person knows it is criminal behaviour to cover up the truth and deny justice. That is what is happening in Australia today.

Richard, your cause has won our esteem. Good luck for today.