

Amnesty International Eastern suburbs group

Amnesty International Redfern group

Sydney May 25, 2023

We, the Eastern suburbs and the Redfern Amnesty International groups in Sydney, welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework.

For over 15 years our two groups have devoted their efforts to holding the government to its obligation to uphold human rights in this country. The groups collectively represent 86,613 supporters from Wentworth and the federal seat of Sydney.

Because of our long term fight for human rights we support the legislation of a federal Human Rights Act, also known as a Human Rights Charter. Our activists and members in New South Wales are also particularly concerned that our state is one of the last without the protection of a Human Rights Act.

Our two groups are contributing this submission because we believe a Human Rights Act in Australia is long overdue. Over the years we have advocated to see the end of incarceration of children and of the indefinite detention of asylum seekers. For too long the rights of the elderly, people with disabilities and minorities have not been given the protection they needed.

In the last few years we have witnessed the erosion of fundamental rights, such as the right to protest. As citizens, we don't feel safe living in a society where the basic right to peacefully express one's opinion is being eroded.

We are also concerned about the lack of laws that enshrine protection for the environment. To fulfil our obligation to future generations we see it as urgent to have a Human Rights Act so that our Air, Land and Waters are looked after.

A Human Rights Act will help prevent human rights abuses because it will place human rights at the heart of decision making by requiring governments to consider human rights when drafting laws, developing policies, delivering services, and making decisions.

Importantly, this Act will give people the power to take action if their rights are violated, as well as seek reparations for violations.

Finally, a Human Rights Act will foster respect for human rights in Australia, so that we can work toward a future where everyone, everywhere understands their rights and the rights of others.

We support a legislated Human Rights Act like those in Victoria, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory, and support the position paper released by the Australian Human Rights Commission in March 2023.

An Act should include the human rights Australia has already promised to uphold under international law, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the rights of children and people with disabilities.

If implemented a Human Rights Act will bring strength and clarity across our society and institutions as it has done in other many countries. Please consider legislating a Human Rights Act as it will be for the benefit of us all.

We ask that you make this a priority for the Federal Government.

Yours sincerely,

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