

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
CHAIR'S TABLING STATEMENT

Tuesday 12 September 2017

I rise to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' *Human Rights Scrutiny Report 10 of 2017*.

The committee examines the compatibility of recent bills and legislative instruments with Australia's obligations under international human rights law.

In performing its scrutiny function, the committee may play an important role in enhancing understanding of, and respect for, human rights in Australia as well as ensuring appropriate consideration of human rights issues in legislative and policy development. In my view, the committee is well placed to take on a crucial leadership role in the consideration and oversight of human rights matters. To this end, the committee recently had a very productive meeting with the new President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Professor Rosalind Croucher, and a number of areas of interest were discussed.

Turning to the committee's current report, the majority of new bills considered – eleven – were assessed as either promoting human rights, permissibly limiting human rights or not engaging human rights. There are also two matters in respect of which the committee is seeking further information from the relevant minister in relation to human rights compatibility.

The report also contains the committee's concluded examination of a number of pieces of legislation including the:

- Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017
- Passports Legislation Amendment (Overseas Travel by Child Sex Offenders) Bill 2017
- Social Services Legislation Amendment (Payment Integrity) Bill 2017
- Social Services Legislation Amendment (Better Targeting Student Payments) Bill 2017

In relation to the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Payment Integrity) Bill 2017, the committee initially raised concerns about the compatibility of measures in this bill with the right to social security, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to equality and non-discrimination. However, following correspondence with the minister and the provision of further information, the committee has concluded that these measures are likely to be compatible with human rights. This was on the basis of the existence of safeguards which appear designed to assist to ensure that the most vulnerable will continue to have access to social security payments to meet basic necessities in a range of circumstances.

I encourage my fellow members and others to examine the report to enhance their understanding of the committee's work.

With these comments, I commend the committee's Report 10 of 2017 to the Chamber.