



Treaties Committee approves anti-torture agreement

Protections against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment will be strengthened under an international agreement approved by the Treaties Committee.

The Committee today tabled its report approving the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment done at New York on 18 December 2002*.

The Protocol increases protection for people detained by authorities and provides for a mechanism to better ensure that detaining authorities are accountable for conditions in places of detention.

Ratification and implementation will improve outcomes for detainees in Australia by providing a more integrated and internationally recognised oversight mechanism and allowing for information sharing on detainee treatment and management between detaining authorities.

Treaties Committee chair, Kelvin Thomson MP, said “the Committee does not want to see implementation of the Protocol delayed and has recommended that the Australian Government works with the States and Territories to implement a national preventive mechanism as quickly as possible.”

“Institutions stand to benefit from improved risk management and regular monitoring as cost savings flow from fewer cases of litigation and investigation arising from allegations of ill treatment during detention,” Mr Thomson said.

The Committee also approved another five treaties including amendments to the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals* to include the Eastern Curlew, a bird which migrates around the world, between the coastal beach and shore areas which it inhabits every year.

“Like many other migratory shorebirds it is highly vulnerable to areas of its habitat being paved over for industrial or housing developments. It and other shorebirds have declined from areas in the Yellow Sea in Korea which they used to use as feeding areas, and I hope that all countries which are party to this Convention will take their responsibilities under this Convention seriously”, Mr Thomson said.

The Committee’s views on all these treaties are covered in Report 125, which is available on the committee’s website:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jsct/28february2012/report.htm or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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