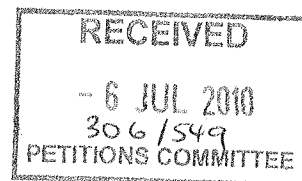




ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP



10/11520, MC10/8146

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

22 JUN 2010

*Julia*  
Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter dated 25 May 2010 referring a petition from the Mornington Peninsula Human Rights Group seeking the introduction of a bill for a Human Rights Act.

As you are aware, on 21 April 2010, I launched Australia's Human Rights Framework. The Framework does not include a Human Rights Act or Charter. This was a decision that the Government did not take lightly. The issue for the Government was not whether human rights should be protected, but how best to do so. Rather than developing a legislative charter, the Framework is focused on ensuring people understand their human rights and responsibilities and that laws are consistent with Australia's international human rights obligations.

The Framework reaffirms the Government's commitment to human rights and community engagement. Guided by the Report of the National Human Rights Consultation, education about human rights and responsibilities has been set as the highest priority within the Framework. This recognises that human rights can be protected and promoted effectively only if an understanding of and commitment to human rights becomes a part of everyday life for the community. Community engagement is central to the success of the implementation of the Framework as all Australians will play a vital role in the promotion and improvement of human rights.

Independent research commissioned by the Consultation Committee showed that 90% of respondents supported enhanced attention by Parliament to human rights issues when making new laws. I am pleased to advise that on 2 June 2010, I introduced the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Bill 2010* into Parliament. The Bill provides for the establishment of a new Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and requires statements assessing compatibility of new laws with Australia's international human rights obligations to accompany new legislation. The Government believes that increased Parliamentary scrutiny will ensure public confidence that our laws reflect our human rights obligations.

This will be the first ever Committee dedicated to human rights scrutiny at the federal level. Increased Parliamentary scrutiny will ensure public confidence that our laws reflect our human rights obligations.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Robert McClelland