

SUBMISSION NO. 19

TT on 26 August 2008

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

**Submission Regarding the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All
Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

As a 20-year-old young woman, I DO NOT believe that Australia should sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

I am very concerned that upon signing of this Protocol individuals or groups can appeal to the UN the decisions of our courts on what they perceive as “women’s rights” issues; thus overriding the democratic purpose of our political and legal system. It could occur that such issues would be of significant public division on religious, cultural and ethical grounds. Decisions relating to these matters should be undertaken by our political representatives and/or those empowered by the Australian justice system.

It is worrying that the CEDAW (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) is reluctant to censure the human rights abuses of China, India and Burma such as the sex-selective abortive process of females and the oppression of those who speak out on human rights abuses against women. The Committee’s known ineffectiveness (consistent overdue reports and backlogs) and inconsistent procedures and guidelines are also areas of concern.

It would be imprudent for Australia to sign away the very serious issue of women’s human rights to an external ideological committee with an unimpressive record. I believe we should be able to stand proud on the basis of our own policy decisions as an internationally respected leader in the area of women’s human rights.

Siobhan Reeves

18/09/08