

SUBMISSION No 22
Treaties tabled on 26 August 2008



Mr Russel Chafer
Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Mr Chafer,

AUSTRALIA'S ACCESSION TO THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The Law Council of Australia is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' inquiry into Australia's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ('the Optional Protocol').

The Law Council has a longstanding commitment to the removal of discrimination, including on the basis of sex, and strongly supports Australia becoming a party to the Optional Protocol.

This view was conveyed to the Attorney-General's Department in a letter dated 30 June 2008. A copy of the letter is attached.

In the letter, the Law Council expressed the view that accession to the Optional Protocol has the potential to provide the impetus for the full implementation of Convention rights in Australia, stimulate changes in discriminatory laws and practices and provide redress for individual instances of violations of women's rights.

Accession to the Optional Protocol would also demonstrate Australia's strong commitment to adhering to its obligations under the Convention by opening itself up to international scrutiny.

In addition to promoting women's rights in Australia, accession to the Optional Protocol would generate greater awareness of international human rights standards relating to discrimination against women and place the Convention on an equal footing with other major human rights treaties, most of which have complaints procedures.



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The National Impact Assessment prepared for consideration by this Committee indicates strong support for Australia's accession to the Optional Protocol from non-government organisations and members of the public as well as from the States and Territories.

In light of this wide-spread support, the Law Council submits that the Committee should recommend that Australia become a party to the Optional Protocol.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W Grant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Grant
Secretary-General

25 September 2008