



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub Committee

MEDIA RELEASE
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Chair: Hon Laurie Ferguson MP
Deputy: Hon Philip Ruddock MP

Human Rights Sub-Committee recommends establishing human rights web portal

More needs to be done to enhance reporting and increase engagement between the Government and the Australian community on human rights, according to a new report by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

The *Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam* report recommends that the Australian Government create a human rights web portal that provides a central access point for all of Australia's human rights matters.

"Evidence received for this inquiry has shown that the Australian Community is actively engaged in human rights advocacy in Australia and internationally," Human Rights Sub-Committee Chair Laurie Ferguson said. "More needs to be done to involve the community. Establishing a human rights web portal will enable Government Departments and agencies to improve their reporting of human rights as well as increase the transparency of Australia's efforts to promote and protect human rights."

The report also recommends that the Australian Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs continue to support the human rights dialogue process by:

- establishing a biennial meeting, to be held alternately in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, to discuss Australia's human rights dialogues;
- enhancing its reporting of Australia's human rights dialogues in the Department of Foreign Affairs' Annual Report;
- ensuring that parliamentary participation in the dialogue process is ongoing, properly funded and facilitated; and
- convening a panel of experts to produce a report that outlines a clear set of principles, aims and benchmarks for Australia's human rights dialogues.

The report also recommends that the Australian Government consider re-establishing its human rights dialogue with Iran as well as making representations to the Sri Lankan government to open a formal human rights dialogue.

On broader human rights engagement, the report made several recommendations, including that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Attorney General's Department enhance its human rights education and training to include all relevant staff and the Australian Government assist interested Asia-Pacific countries in the establishment and development of national human rights institutions within their respective country.

The report is available online at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jfadt>

For media comment: please contact the Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Laurie Ferguson MP on (02) 9829 7477 (Electorate Office) or (02) 6277 4920 (Parliament House)

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