

## Australia needs a Federal Human Rights Act



Available to download at:

- <https://aran.net.au/resources/letter-writing/>
- <https://ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au/write-a-letter>

Included in this kit is the information you need to create your own letters or use the proformas

- Guide and Background notes prepared by ARAN's Letter Writing Network.
- Postal Addresses for MPs and Senators
- Email addresses for MPs and Senator and contact form for Minister and Prime Minister
- Sample letter and/or Suggested points to mention in your letter or email.

### **Personalised letters are best –**

You might like to use the **AIDA** principle

- **A - Attention** - grab the recipient's attention. Say something positive about the reader that is directed towards the focus of your letter. Stimulate the recipient's curiosity
- **I - Interest & Information**- encourage the recipient to read on.
- **D - Desire** - Getting the reader to want to do what you are seeking - in their interest to do so.
- **A - Action**- inform the reader of the action you want them to take.

The ARAN Letter Writing Network Contact: [austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com)

## **Why it's important to write about this issue**

Human rights issues arise in situations of power imbalance.

Respecting human rights enables people to enjoy their life, free from any unnecessary mental or physical suffering caused by other people who have power over them. All those in power need to assess the human impact of proposed laws, policies and procedures before implementing them.

The Albanese Government has consulted on the proposal to introduce a Human Rights Framework. After considering 335 public submissions and 4135 letters this year, the joint parliamentary committee strongly endorsed the Commission's reform proposals. We are encouraging you to write to remind the government that there is strong support for a Human Rights Act to ensure that human rights are upheld in Australian society.

**Write to all federal parliamentarians – it is time for Australia to have a federal Human Rights Act.**

# REFUGEE SECTOR LETTER KIT

November 2024



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This century through various formal public apologies, Royal Commissions, reports and inquiries, we have acknowledged neglect and cruelty inside our own country impacting first nations families, aged people, disabled people, people involved in forced adoptions, homeless people, people suffering domestic violence, gender diverse people.

This century Australia has inflicted devastating, even deadly impacts on refugees and people seeking asylum: officials calling people by numbers not their given names, capturing people and sending them into remote hostile locations, severely curtailing their communications with the outside world, preventing public scrutiny, denying timely adequate medical and dental care, separating family members, detaining people illegally, embroiling people in complex slow-moving bureaucratic systems and prolonged limbo.

Making all our institutions more respectful of people is a large task ahead. Cultural change is the goal.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's Report "Free and Equal" was tabled in December 2023 and this report formed the basis for a model Human Rights Act. The federal government set up an enquiry and sought submissions from the public. The Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in May this year strongly supported the proposed model for a Human rights Framework.

*"We are focussed on what Australia should be...If we do value fairness, if we do value dignity, if we do care about equality of opportunity in this country, then we need this foundation of human rights to be embedded and strengthened for all. ... The hard thinking has been done. The design work has been done."* - Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher AM FAAL FRSA FACLM(Hon) FRSN, previous president of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

### For further information:

**The Australian Human Rights Commission has been advocating for a Human Rights Framework for some years** – see <https://humanrights.gov.au/free-and-equal>

**National Press Club Address** – President Rosalind Croucher – 3 July 2024 Free + Equal: safeguarding the rights of all Australians. <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/national-press-club-address-president-rosalind-croucher-3-july>

Some states have already passed their own human rights acts – ACT 2004 Victoria 2006 and Queensland 2019. They reported successful beneficial outcomes to the **Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights** in May 2024. The Joint Committee's report (including dissenting comments):

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Human\\_Rights/HumanRightsFramework/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Human_Rights/HumanRightsFramework/Report)

**Human Rights Law Centre** - <https://www.hrlc.org.au/reports-news-commentary/national-charter-of-human-rights> The 101 cases - <https://www.humanrightsfact.org.au/101-cases> - on the HRLC website are an invaluable resource when advocating for a HR Act as documented examples of the benefits from having HR Acts in Victoria, Qld, and the ACT.

**Interview** with Lorraine Finlay, the Human Rights Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights Commission about <https://www.ruleoflaw.org.au/education/human-rights/arguments-charter-of-rights/>

Michael Kirby's and Jennifer Robinson's keynote addresses to the Australian Human Rights Commission conference held in July this year: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=6FOX\\_qmDpDA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=6FOX_qmDpDA)

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## We suggest you write to:

- Your **local MP** whichever party they belong to. [Find details for your MP here](#)
- [All federal senators for your state](#)

## Also write to

The Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese Contact form: <https://www.pm.gov.au/contact>

And using this link [https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members](https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members) contact any of the following

Attorney-General, The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP [Mark.Dreyfus.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Mark.Dreyfus.MP@aph.gov.au)

The Hon Tony Burke, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security; [Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au)

The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP Assistant Minister for Immigration, [Matt.Thistlethwaite.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Matt.Thistlethwaite.MP@aph.gov.au)

Senator The Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for the Public Service [senator.katy.gallagher@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.katy.gallagher@aph.gov.au)

**Find postal and email addresses for electoral offices MPs and Senators** here: [contact list of all MPs and Senators here](#) or use search function on parliamentary website [https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members](https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members)  
When sending emails remember to **include** your NAME and ADDRESS

**Letters to PM and Ministers** should be posted to PO Box 6022, Parliament House, Canberra 2600

## **Addresses for letters:**

### **Canberra Postal Address for all SENATORS**

PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

### **Canberra Postal Address for all MPs**

PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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## SAMPLE LETTER (this letter is provided as a guide – please use your own words)

Dear

I am writing in support of the broad community wish for Australia to have a federal Human Rights Act.

This December it will be 76 years since the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

In essence, any discussion about human rights is about all people being able to enjoy their life, free from any unnecessary suffering caused by other people who have power over them.

So often human rights issues arise from situations of power imbalance – those in power not considering what other people need for a life free from mental or physical suffering. Sometimes decisions made for political expediency result in violations of human rights. We all need protection from such violations.

This century in our own country we have been made more aware of neglect and cruelty impacting our first nations families, aged people, disabled people, people on low wages, homeless people, gender diverse people, people suffering domestic violence. We constantly are seeing fresh exposés of abuses. Criminal behaviour by individuals is one problem. Just as importantly we need to pay attention to all our state functionaries: in recent memory “Robodebt” – a federal government policy put into practice by elected officials and by our public service - resulted in at least seven suicides by its victims.

Making all our institutions more respectful of people is a large task ahead.

We need to honour and uphold the human rights of all people, including non-citizens. For decades we have seen official Australian actions and their devastating, even deadly impacts on refugees and people seeking asylum: Australian officials calling people by numbers not their given names, sending people into extremely remote and too often hostile locations, denying desperately needed medical and dental care, separating family members, embroiling people in complex bureaucratic systems and prolonged limbos. Many deaths have ensued and more continue as more people trapped in our bureaucratic systems give in to despair.

I urge you to build on the proposed framework in the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Report “Free and Equal” which was tabled in December 2023. Please work to support a national human rights act. After considering 335 public submissions and 4135 letters this year, the joint parliamentary committee strongly endorsed the Commission’s reform proposals. Public opinion is behind this reform.

Despite the truly horrifying violence and destruction currently in many places in the world, let’s keep working to make our Australian nation a place where our laws reflect everyone’s human rights, where our public officials are accountable for their actions and where we treat all people with basic respect.

Yours faithfully,

(Name)

(Address)