

# National Human Rights Consultation Submission

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**Submission Text:**

I believe that the quality of a country's human rights protections is a barometer of the health of the country itself. Australia could and should be a leading international light in the delivery of visionary democratic liberty and inclusion, social justice, human rights and a fair go for all; it is in our national character.

As a new Australian myself, I am a firm believer that what makes this country special is that fact that it is a cultural melting pot populated by people who very largely have chosen to be here, and are therefore passionate about the place where they live. You can see it in the largely peaceful multiculturalism we enjoy, in the civic pride, in things like Clean Up Australia day and voluntary organisations like Bushcare, the SES and Surf lifesaving clubs.

Also so many of our citizenships have seen or come from countries where these freedoms are not available, so Australia represents, for many, a safe haven from this life experience.

It is imperative that we foster and protect transparent democracy, justice and sense of a fair go for all.

Human rights as we know are notoriously hard to install and protect but terribly easy to undermine and revoke. That's why it is so important that we defend them to the best of our abilities. If we chip, chip chip into them, our future becomes a darker more controlled and Orwellian prospect. Probably an efficiently run state - but at what cost? The ultimate one I would argue.

Great nations and communities are formed by participation and empowerment and mutual support, not by draconian rules and inhuman treatment regimes.

My three key areas for concern are;

1. Development of a charter that enshrines and protects civil liberties in our civil society. This should enshrine government freedom of information principles and protect against extra police rights being implemented without public consultation, such as being able to enter and search your property without telling you and monitoring your communications without reasonable cause. Also of serious concern is data sharing with other organisations and governments. As a law abiding citizen of two countries, the only one that has my fingerprints is US immigration. How do I control where that data travels to and for what purpose?
2. Freedom of Speech. The internet censorship proposed by this government strikes at the heart of democracy and free speech. I am flabbergasted by the suggestion. Is this China? It is abhorrent to suggest that our access to the freest information tool in the history of the planet should be curtailed and constrained by bureaucrats for some static and imposed notion of national safety.
3. Treatment of asylum seekers. Whilst I naturally acknowledge the need to keep our shores safe, those that reach us as asylum seekers have often come from great hardship. Whilst some good work has been done with regard to bridging visas, I would still call for an end to detention, to a review of right to work and make a plea for a speedy and human expedition of the process to minimise the mental impacts on guests who are looking to us for sanctuary.

Thanks for your time on this most important of subjects.

Esther Bailey