



**Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House
Incorporated**

**REFUGEE CIVIL
LAW CLINIC**

**Submission to the National Human Rights
Consultation**

15 June 2009

Prepared by the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated's
Refugee Civil Law Clinic

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About QPILCH

QPILCH is an independent, not-for-profit incorporated association bringing together private law firms, barristers, community legal centres, law schools, legal professional associations, corporate legal units and government legal units to provide free and low cost legal services to people who cannot afford private legal assistance or obtain legal aid.

QPILCH was established in June 2001 as an initiative of the legal profession and commenced services in January 2002.

QPILCH coordinates the following services:

- The **public interest referral service** facilitates legal referrals to member law firms and barristers for free legal advice and assistance in *public interest* civil law cases.
- The **QLS and Bar pro-bono schemes** facilitate legal referrals to participating law firms and barristers for free legal advice and assistance in eligible civil law cases.
- The **Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic** (HPLC) provides free legal advice and assistance to people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.
- The **Refugee Civil Law Clinic** provides free legal advice and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers experiencing financial hardship in civil law matters other than immigration law.
- The **Administrative Law Clinic** provides legal advice and extended minor assistance in administrative law matters.
- The **Self-Representation Civil Law Service** (SRCLS) provides legal advice and assistance to eligible applicants without legal representation in the civil trial jurisdictions of the Brisbane Supreme and District Courts.
- The **Court of Appeal Self-Representation Civil Law Service** (CASRCLS) provides legal advice and assistance to eligible applicants without legal representation in the civil jurisdiction of the Queensland Court of Appeal.

QPILCH is a member of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services, affiliated with the National Association of Community Legal Centres, and is a member of the PILCH network.

For more information about QPILCH services, please see the QPILCH website at www.qpilch.org.au under Services.

Submission endorsements

QPILCH facilitated the completion and collection of five client questionnaires, which can each be considered submissions in their own right. QPILCH acknowledges and endorses these submissions, which are annexed to this document.

Introduction

The Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (**QPILCH**) Refugee Civil Law Clinic (**RCLC**) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the National Human Rights Consultation.

The RCLC, a project of QPILCH,¹ operates a fortnightly clinic in South Brisbane, and since its inception in 2007 has assisted almost 100 refugees through the provision of pro bono legal and advocacy services.

In order to facilitate the participation of refugees in the National Human Rights Consultation, we provided our clients with the opportunity to complete questionnaires seeking details of their human rights related experiences in Australia and their views on human rights in general. QPILCH's Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (**HPLC**) undertook the same process for clients of the HPLC, the results of which comprise a separate submission to the Consultation.

QPILCH received five completed questionnaires from clients of the RCLC. While each submission should be viewed on its own, it is possible to say that in general, the submissions demonstrate a general satisfaction with the protection of human rights in Australia, despite some difficulties faced by refugees in their day to day existence.

We note that all five respondents had already been granted refugee status within Australia. These submissions will therefore not reflect the well-documented problems faced by those individuals seeking recognition as refugees, particularly those who attempt 'unauthorised' entry into Australia.

The submissions provide insight into the way human rights are viewed by settled refugees within Australia. We believe that hearing from vulnerable sections of the community is integral to a successful and thorough consultation process. We therefore commend the attached submissions to you.

¹ See www.qpilch.org.au.