

Human Rights Consultation  
Sue Britt 21/4/09

I am lucky. I have never experienced hunger, dispossession, war. I take human rights for granted as I take my good health and education for granted. When I read books like Sally Sara's Gogo Mama about women in Africa and Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns about women in Afghanistan I reflect on my good luck to have been born in an affluent society where human rights are respected.

I appreciate this opportunity to think about human rights. I wonder what is meant by *human* and also what is meant by *rights*.

I am concerned that the emphasis on HUMAN will be at the expense of other animals and the environment. I'd like to see greater respect for the planet as a whole. When there is conflict of interest between human needs and others, I'd like to see more consideration given to balance and the future.

I am concerned that the emphasis on RIGHTS will be at the expense of individual responsibility. I see this in school where students are quick to insist on their rights but reluctant to take responsibility. In my teaching career I've seen a steady increase in the expectations of teachers and a corresponding decrease in expectations of families and students. I see this on television current events programs where an ever-increasing number of human desires are called 'rights.' Almost invariably these 'rights' are supposed to be provided by the government.

I hope this consultation will not result in a bill or charter of human rights. I would oppose a charter of human rights for the following reasons:

- I would not like **human** rights guaranteed at the expense of animal or environmental rights.
- I would not like to see human **desires** codified into law as **rights**.
- I shudder to think of lawyers' delight if yet another litigation hunting ground is created.
- I cannot see how a bill of rights would improve the daily life of people whose rights are compromised by lack of education, history, drink, drugs, etc.

Human rights are already well protected in Australia and, while I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on what is meant by human rights, I think existing systems more than adequately protect them.