

Media release

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106 organisations and experts call for inquiry into Human Rights Act for NSW

More than 100 organisations and individuals have endorsed an [open statement](#) calling on all NSW Parliamentarians to support the establishment of a public inquiry into a Human Rights Act for New South Wales.

On Thursday 23 October 2025, the Member for Newtown, Jenny Leong MP, will introduce a private member's Human Rights Bill. [Human Rights Act for NSW](#) - an alliance of [90 peak and community organisations](#) working across NSW says the Bill puts forward a model that reflects long-standing laws already successfully operating in other states and is calling on the parliament to refer it for a comprehensive community consultation.

There has never been a better time for an inquiry into a Human Rights Act for NSW. Everyone in NSW should have the opportunity to have their say on how best to legally protect the dignity, security and interests of everyone in our State.

NSW is lagging behind. Human Rights Acts have already been passed in the Australian Capital Territory (2004), Victoria (2006) and Queensland (2019). Recent major inquiries at the federal level and in South Australia have both recommended that parliaments address gaps in the human rights protections afforded to people by introducing a comprehensive Human Rights Act.

The NSW Labor Platform, taken to the last election and endorsed again in 2024, unequivocally supports a 'community consultation into the introduction of further legislation to better protect the human rights of NSW residents.' When notice of the private member's bill was given in March this year, the NSW Attorney General, the Hon Michael Daley MP, stated that the government is 'open to considering the issue and working constructively' on the proposal.

Kerry Weste, HRA4NSW spokesperson and Vice President of Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) said: *This statement represents a powerful, unified call from an incredibly diverse range of voices - representing tens of thousands of stakeholders - who want to live in a NSW that strives for the values we all hold most dear - justice, equality and a 'fair go' for all.*

Every day in Victoria, the ACT and Queensland people are benefiting in concrete ways because they have a Human Rights Act that helps government officials to make fair and caring decisions about things like access to government services. These laws, which have been operating successfully for decades, also support community-focused policy development in areas like domestic violence, housing, education, aged care and healthcare.

It's time for NSW to embrace the opportunity to learn from the experience in these jurisdictions. Referring this bill to an inquiry will give everyone in NSW the chance to participate in a community-wide conversation about putting in place a similar law to protect the wellbeing and dignity for everyone in our state."

Tim Roberts, President of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties (NSWCCL) said: *“A NSW Human Rights Act would create a legislated framework that articulates and protects human rights for everyone in NSW based on Australia’s international legal obligations under core United Nations treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It would significantly improve the way our parliament, government and public entities develop laws, policies and make decisions. It would also create accessible pathways that everyone in NSW can use to take action for a solution if their human rights are breached. This framework is based on the values that the people of NSW hold most dear and will create a much-needed culture of human rights in our state that will, in turn, work to improve wellbeing, dignity and equality in our day to day lives.”*

Sarah Marland, CLCNSW Executive Director said: *“In the absence of a Human Rights Act, the most vulnerable people in our community live without any legislated framework to protect their rights and freedoms. Human rights should be at the heart of the work of our government and its agencies, from the development of laws and policies, through to the smaller everyday decision-making that can so profoundly impact our quality of life. Everyone in NSW should be able to access affordable, simple solutions for justice if their human rights are breached.”*

Nikita White, Campaigner, Amnesty International Australia said: *“A Human Rights Act gives people in NSW a powerful tool to take action if they suffer human rights abuses. People in NSW need that tool now more than ever, whether they’re a family living in their car because they can’t afford housing or a pensioner putting off doctor’s appointments because they can’t afford healthcare. It would allow people to create better lives for themselves and for those around them, where everyone can enjoy their rights to housing, healthcare, a healthy environment, and more.”*

Amnesty’s polling has shown that 75% of people support protecting everyone’s human rights in law. We call on the NSW government to legislate a Human Rights Act so people in NSW can challenge human rights abuses, right wrongs, and create a fairer future for everyone.”

Megan Spindler-Smith (they/them/Mx), Deputy CEO, People With Disability Australia (PWDA) said: *“We need a human rights approach that ensures people with disability are not forgotten or left behind when we talk about human rights. PWDA welcomes the Greens introduction of a Bill for a New South Wales Human Rights Act. An Act under which we are equal and fully protected is the right way forward for our community.”*

Existing human rights frameworks in New South Wales do not provide adequate protection or stop the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation people with disability have endured for far too long.

When our rights are breached there must be consequences. It is critical the NSW Anti-Discrimination Commission is resourced to enforce new protections and ensure effective supports for all people in New South Wales.”

Professor Amy Maguire, Director of the University of Newcastle Centre for Law and Social Justice said: *“Over the past four years, the Centre for Law and Social Justice has consulted extensively with school students from the Hunter region about the state of human rights in NSW.”*

Young people are demanding that parliament act to protect their human rights. They are acutely aware of the social, economic and environmental challenges that put human rights at risk and call on political leaders to ensure that everyone has equal access to quality education, a healthy environment, and the chance to participate in public life.

There are significant disparities in opportunities and outcomes for people across NSW. The NSW Parliament can drive meaningful change across the State by legislating human rights protections, because legal protection for human rights drives proactive approaches to human rights across our institutions and society.”

Karly Warner, CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT said: *“The human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are violated too often in NSW prisons, policing and child protection systems. Enacting a Human Rights Act for NSW could provide much-needed protection and recourse for when these rights are not upheld as they should be.*

“Having a Human Rights Act would bring NSW in line with Victoria, Queensland and the ACT, where human rights protections are already enshrined.

“We call on the NSW Parliament to conduct a comprehensive community consultation on a Human Rights Act and, in particular, to ensure the views of Aboriginal communities are heard and honoured.”

Blake Alan Cansdale, National Director of ANTAR said: *For too long, the inherent human rights of Aboriginal peoples have been treated as optional in NSW. A Human Rights Act would help change that, by embedding fairness, dignity and accountability into the way that the NSW Government makes laws, develops policy and delivers services. It would also bring NSW standards of governance into greater alignment with international standards, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP affirms restorative rights: universal rights that every human is entitled to, reframed to reflect the unique histories and injustices faced by First Nations peoples. ANTAR is proud to stand with so many others in calling for stronger human rights protections in NSW.”*

Jackie Mead, CEO of Knowmore Legal Service said: *Knowmore welcomes this important first step in NSW towards recognising and protecting the human rights of everyone in our community. We particularly welcome recognition of the rights of children and young people and victims and survivors of violence, who far too often face legal systems that are weighted against them and only cause further harm.*

We call on the NSW Parliament to commence a public inquiry into this Bill, so that we can continue on this shared path to a Human Rights Act for NSW.

Caitlin Reiger, CEO of the Human Rights Law Centre said: *“Everyone benefits from having Human Rights at the heart of our laws. We’ve already seen how human rights laws in Victoria, Queensland and the ACT have made a real difference to people’s lives – from overturning unfair evictions, safeguarding access to medical treatment, and stopping children from being locked up in cruel conditions. People in NSW deserve these human rights protections too.”*

Genevieve Henderson, NSW Branch President, Australian Lawyers Alliance said *“Drawing on the experiences in Victoria, the ACT and Queensland, there is evidence that important and practical human rights protections can be achieved when human rights laws are in place.*

“NSW needs to catch up with accepted and developing international standards when it comes to protecting the human rights of our citizens. Human rights laws are positive and effective mechanisms for safeguarding the dignity and well-being of everyone in a healthy democracy.

“Human rights legislation in NSW would not only deliver protection and freedoms but ensure that governments and leaders are accountable to the Australian people.”

Leo Patterson Ross, CEO, Tenants' Union of NSW said: *“Our housing system needs all the help it can get at the moment. A human rights act which delivers on the right to adequate housing will make an enormous difference in protecting communities from unfair evictions, excessive rent prices and unhealthy homes. The premier state should lead the way in delivering the homes people need.”*

To arrange an interview with the HRA4NSW Alliance contact:

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HRA4NSW is Co-Convened by Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties.

The full statement and a list of the endorsing organisations and individuals is [available here](#). A list of case studies that evidence the benefits that Human Rights Acts are delivering in the ACT, Victoria and QLD is available [below](#).



Case studies that evidence the benefits of the Human Rights Acts operating in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria

Charter rights protect man's home in Victoria

A Victorian man with physical disabilities and limited mobility continued to live in his family home after his mother had been admitted to an elderly care unit and placed under a financial administration order. In order to prevent the home being sold, the man's advocate raised the right to property under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. In consideration of this right, an agreement was reached so that the man could continue living in the house as a tenant paying rent.

Human rights law reopens domestic violence case in Victoria

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act was used in a matter relating to the payment of rent and repairs to a property. The woman involved had been forced to flee the property due to domestic violence. The advocate successfully used the Charter in arguing for the reopening of the matter after the limitation period had expired to protect the woman's rights.

Accessible transport win after human rights complaint in Queensland

A woman with mobility issues made a complaint to the Queensland Human Rights Commission about the limited number of accessible parking spots at a bus terminal and being issued with a number of fines for parking in other places. She said that on two occasions the bus driver refused to engage the ramp, requiring her to struggle up and down the bus stairs. The complaint was resolved on the basis that the transport service agreed to conduct an internal review of its policies and procedures about the use of ramps, and to provide a copy to all bus drivers employed by it. Employees were also required to attend training on the Anti-Discrimination Act and the Human Rights Act, and an internal training module on human rights and improving services to people with disability was introduced.

Aged care resident's freedom of movement upheld in the ACT

A man living in an ACT residential aged care facility relied on a wheelchair to move around. Staff at the facility became concerned the man was a danger to himself and others when using his chair so they removed the batteries so the chair would not work. The man's advocate asserted that this breached his right to freedom of movement protected by the ACT's Human Rights Act. In response, and in recognition of the man's rights, the facility worked with the man and his advocate to find other, less restrictive, ways to ensure he was able to move about freely but safely. This included support for him to use the footpaths safely so he could travel from his home to the nearby shops when he wanted to.