

# A National Human Rights Framework for Australia

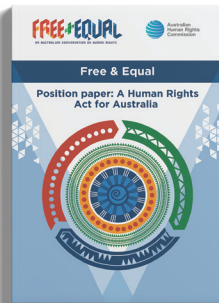
The Australian Human Rights Commission has recommended a [Human Rights Act for Australia](#) and has put forward a proposal outlining a suggested model for an Act. However, a Human Rights Act alone is not enough to ensure that human rights will be protected in Australia. We also need mechanisms to ensure that community members whose rights are most affected by proposed laws and policies can participate in the processes of law-making and policy-making. We need processes to ensure effective governance for the protection of human rights, and systems of accountability to ensure that all parties are fulfilling their role. We also need a system to monitor what difference these actions are making. We need a national human rights framework to meet these needs.

## What is the Australian Human Rights Commission's proposal for a National Human Rights Framework?

The Australian Human Rights Commission proposes a national framework built on **5 pillars**:

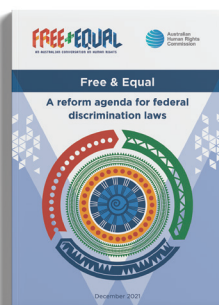
### 1 A Human Rights Act for Australia

A Human Rights Act is the centrepiece of the proposed National Human Rights Framework. The model proposed would require Government to consider human rights in their policy-making and decision-making, and would provide legal remedies for people whose rights have been breached. See [A Human Rights Act for Australia \(2023\)](#).



### 2 Modernised federal discrimination laws

Australia's federal discrimination laws (the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and *Age Discrimination Act 2004*) need updating so they are fit-for-purpose for the 21st century. See [A reform agenda for federal discrimination laws \(2021\)](#).



### 3 Strengthening the role of Parliament in protecting human rights

A more systematic approach is proposed to the way that Parliament considers the scope of Australia's international human rights obligations and responds to breaches of these obligations. Reforms are also suggested to improve Parliamentary scrutiny of the human rights impacts of proposed domestic laws.

### 4 A national Human Rights Indicator Index

A national indicator index would track Australia's performance in key areas of human rights over time, providing a public monitoring system to enhance accountability for human rights outcomes. The index should be developed using a robust consultation process to help ensure that the indicators selected are relevant and meaningful to the most vulnerable people in our community.

### 5 An annual statement to Parliament by the Government

An annual statement to Parliament would provide an opportunity for the Government to commit to action on human rights. It would provide a basis for the Government to announce priority areas for the protection of human rights, to report on and celebrate progress made against the priorities of the previous year, and to reflect on continuing human rights challenges.



**Necessary foundations to underpin these 5 pillars are:**



**A national human rights education program**

Educative and awareness-raising measures are needed across all areas of the proposed National Human Rights Framework. It is proposed that the Australian Government develop a National Human Rights Education Action Plan, targeted to the Australian Public Service, primary and secondary schools, workplaces and the general community.



**An effective and sustainable Australian Human Rights Commission**

A properly resourced and appropriately independent Australian Human Rights Commission is critical to the success of the National Human Rights Framework.



**Support for a vibrant civil society to protect human rights**

It is proposed that the government invest in the human rights community, institute regular dialogue forums with the non-government sector, and build community capacity to realise human rights and freedoms.

**How would the proposed National Human Rights Framework be implemented?**

The Australian Human Rights Commission recommends that the Australian Government establish a 10-year plan with appropriate resourcing, mechanisms for community engagement, and regular public reporting of monitoring and evaluation data.



**Australian Human Rights Commission**

**Learn more**

For more information about the Australian Human Rights Commission's proposed national human rights framework, see *Revitalising Australia's Commitment to Human Rights: Free & Equal Final Report 2023* and visit the [Free & Equal website](#) for updates and opportunities to join in advocating for these important changes.

