



Factsheet: Human rights education

Background information

Human rights education is foundational to the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Government funding for human rights education has fluctuated over the last 4 years.

In 2012, as part of the National Human Rights Action Plan, the Australian Government invested over \$12 million in a range of education initiatives to promote a greater understanding of human rights across the community. This included funding for an education and training package for the Australian Government public sector. The package included guidance materials for public sector policy development and implementation of government programs. However grants for human rights education activities were discontinued.¹

The Australian Human Rights Commission has initiated a number of measures relating to human rights education:

- The Australian Public Service Human Rights Network was launched to support the people working within government and to discuss how human rights relate to their work. The Network meets approximately four times a year to discuss contemporary human rights issues and currently has over 600 members.²
- A suite of resources, mapped to the Australian Curriculum, were released for use in schools. The resources are linked to the teaching of History, Civics and Citizenship, Health and Physical Education, Geography, and Mathematics, and include topics relating to anti-racism, disability rights and the Magna Carta. A mapping resource was also developed for teachers called Human Rights Examples for the Australian Curriculum. The mapping resource is designed as a guide for teachers to provide human rights related examples that are consistent with key learning area content descriptions. Interactive websites were also created to teach children and young people about human rights.³

Australia's activities for the World Program for Human Rights Education have been ad hoc and uncoordinated.

Key issue

There remains a need for ongoing human rights education across the public sector particularly as funding for these initiatives has ceased. Further education is also needed in the administration of justice and places of detention, within the tertiary and vocational education sector and across the community.

Some members of parliament have publically expressed an inaccurate understanding of human rights in the context of various political issues. This can negatively impact the greater population's understanding and attitudes towards human rights.

Recommendation

Government expand its support for human rights education initiatives, including targeted initiatives for public officials and schools.

¹ Australian Government, *National Action Plan on Human Rights*. At <http://www.ag.gov.au/Consultations/Documents/NationalHumanRightsActionPlan/National%20Human%20Rights%20Plan.pdf> (viewed 22 June 2015).

² Australian Human Rights Commission, *APS Human Rights Network*. At <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/aps-human-rights-network> (viewed 22 June 2015).

³ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Human rights education and training*. At <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/human-rights-education-and-training> (viewed 22 June 2015).