

Human rights scenarios

Activity sheet

Every year on December 10, we commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During 2009, the Australian Government conducted a series of human rights consultations on human rights in Australia.

The human rights consultation process has raised the following questions:

- Which human rights (including corresponding responsibilities) should be protected and promoted?
- Are these human rights currently sufficiently protected and promoted?
- How could Australia better protect and promote human rights?

In order to answer the questions above, read through the hypothetical scenarios below and discuss with a group/class how you might respond to the questions asked.

1. Young people and police custody

A 15 year old African Australian Islander girl is taken to the police station for questioning about a robbery. As she is being driven to the station the police ask her a lot of questions. She doesn't have a liaison officer, a legal advocate, a parent or an adult carer with her while she is being questioned. The girl does not know her rights.

Do you know your rights? Why, why not? Does the government have a role to play in this situation?

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2. Control of Centrelink money

The Government has concerns that Aboriginal people are spending their Centrelink money on the wrong things like alcohol and gambling and are worried that there is too much humbugging taking place in communities. As a result, the Government has decided to make sure that people receiving the Centrelink payment spend half their money on food and clothing. They have set up a system so the money can only be spent on these things. This rule only applies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It does not apply to non-Indigenous people.

What do you think about this? Why?

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3. Safety and police

A small remote community of 90 people has problems with fighting at night. Many people are frightened and don't know what to do when they are in danger. There are no police in the community and the Government says the community is too small to set up a police station.

What is your view? Should the Government take action? If yes, what action should they take? If not, why not?

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4. Drinking water

A remote community with a population of about 50 people has access to bore water but it is not good quality. The older people are getting sick with kidney problems because of the poor water quality.

Should the people move or should the government do something about it? Why?

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5. Children and safety

A five year old child is wandering around the streets, unsupervised by his mother or father. His parents spend a lot of time at the Casino at night and sleep in late in the mornings. The child is left alone until someone wakes up to get him food.

Does the Government have a role to assist the child and/or the family? What should the Government do in this situation?

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6. Keeping families together

A mother is expecting a baby but there is no hospital in her town of nearly 2,000 people. There is a health clinic but no hospital facilities. The hospital is a long way from the community and the only way to get there is by plane. Under the air transport and health department rules she must go to the hospital four weeks before the baby is due.

The father does not live at home with the children and there is no Government money to fly the children with their mother. The children do not want to be separated from their mother.

Should the Government do anything in this situation? Why or why not?

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7. Disability services

The health clinic in a regional town of Australia has three steps up to the front door. A number of local people have walking sticks and two people are in wheelchairs. Some people have to be carried up the stairs when they attend the health clinic. The clinic has hard wooden floors and when the children run around the waiting room there is a lot of noise. A number of community members have middle ear conditions and as a result they have hearing impediments. There have been complaints that the patients cannot hear the health workers and they have misunderstood important advice because of the noise problems at the clinic.

Does the Government have a responsibility to do something? Why or why not?

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