

## **NSW Charter Group August 2008 Bulletin**

### **Supporting the Federal Charter**

The NSW Charter Group is working on a project to support a campaign to encourage the Federal Attorney-General to announce a start date for a community wide consultation.

Please contact the Charter Group if you are interested in any of the following actions we are supporting:

- .. Letter writing campaign to Prime Minister and Attorney-General
- .. Developing and delivering short presentations with a specific focus (eg youth, health, disability)
- .. Train-the-trainer workshops (Dapto 26 September, Sydney 10 October)
- .. Supporting local action groups

### **News**

The Attorney-General, The Hon Robert McClelland MP addressed the Melbourne Law School Student Centre on 21 August 2008. In his address, he emphasised the Federal Government's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Australians, and reaffirmed that a national inquiry into strengthening rights protection will be announced and that it will seek a broad level of participation as it is possible.

[http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/robertmc.nsf/Page/Speeches\\_2008\\_21August2008-MelbourneLawSchoolFunction](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/robertmc.nsf/Page/Speeches_2008_21August2008-MelbourneLawSchoolFunction)

### **2008 Human Rights Medals and Awards**

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is calling for nominations for the 2008 Human Rights Medals and Awards. More details and nomination forms are available from [www.humanrights.gov.au/hr\\_awards/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/hr_awards/index.html).

Entries close at 5pm on Friday 3 October

### **Exploding the myths – Information Sources**

Read or heard any anti-human rights arguments? Check these out to see why you are better off with human rights protections.

Justice Kirby addressed the Law Institute of Victoria on *The National Debate about a Charter of Rights & Responsibilities – Answering Some of the Critics*. In his speech, Justice Kirby addressed many of the current anti-Charter myths. In particular, he noted that democracy is quite passive, and that there are many injustices in Australia. He considered a Charter of Rights would enhance democracy in Australia and would provide an instrument to which judges can point to in response to excessive abuses of power. He also emphasised the need to engage in a true dialogue that avoids the rhetoric of 'judges drunk on power' image.

Full address: [http://www.hcourt.gov.au/publications\\_05.html#MichaelKirby](http://www.hcourt.gov.au/publications_05.html#MichaelKirby)

***A Tale of Three Cases: Reflections on Rights Protection*** by Stephen Keim

In this article, Stephen Keim looks at three controversial legal cases and concludes that existing mechanisms to protect rights are inadequate, and that explicit human rights legislation is needed to ensure parliamentary proposals are debated before they are enacted, so that our rights cannot be so effortlessly taken away, such as in the *World Youth Day Regulation 2008*. To access the article, go to: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7749>

***Why the Uniting Church Supports a Human Rights Charter*** by Rev. Elenie Poulos

In March 2008, the Uniting Church in Australia formally committed itself to support the development of a national human rights charter for Australia. According to Rev. Poulos, the decision was made on the consensus that existing human rights protections in Australia are insufficient. There continues to be policies that have discriminatory and detrimental effect on specific segments of the population, such as Indigenous people and people with mental illness. He holds that a Charter of Rights would ensure policies and legislations set by parliament meet the standard of the human rights legislation. For the full article, go to: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7746>

***Hostile to Human Rights*** by Terese Henning

Henning considered two popular anti-Charter arguments, and concluded that these are specious arguments against an Australian charter of rights. To view the article:

<http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/letters/index.php/theaustralian/2008/08/P60/>

For excellent and regular human rights information:

Read the Human Rights Law Resource Centre's news bulletin at:  
[http://www.hrlrc.org.au/html/s02\\_article/article\\_view.asp?id=366&nav\\_cat\\_id=138&nav\\_top\\_id=59](http://www.hrlrc.org.au/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?id=366&nav_cat_id=138&nav_top_id=59)

Sign up to the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission mailing lists and alerts on:  
<http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/news%20and%20events/default.asp>

## Events

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – 60 Years on*  
The United Nations Information Centre and Amnesty International ACT and Southern New South Wales is holding an event to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UDHR.

When: Wednesday **3 September** 6 pm – 7 pm

Where: Canberra Museum and Art Gallery Theatre, London Circuit, Civic.  
Places are limited, please RSVP by email to Bede Carmody, Amnesty International Australia: [bede\\_carmody@amnesty.org.au](mailto:bede_carmody@amnesty.org.au)

Training: Protecting Human Rights: Train-the Trainer

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre is offering a one-day workshop for those who want to know more about human rights and are interested in conducting human rights training. Two sessions are currently available:

Friday 26 Sept 2008 – Dapto

Friday 10 Oct 2008 – Sydney CBD

Email Karen for more information or registration form: [kare@piac.asn.au](mailto:kare@piac.asn.au)

Seminars: Understanding International Law and Human Rights  
Amnesty International (August to September)

This is an introductory course for anyone who's ever been curious about what International Law is, who it applies to, and how it is enforced. No prior knowledge is necessary. It contains a total of six seminars, and can be attended as a series or as individual seminars.

Where: Amnesty International Australia, level 1, 79 Myrtle St, Chippendale

When: 6.30pm-8pm Wednesday (from 20 Aug-24 Sept)

Costs: \$10/\$5 per Seminar \$50/\$25 for the course of six

Contact: [nswaia@amnesty.org.au](mailto:nswaia@amnesty.org.au) or 02 8396 7670 for more information and registration

The Diplomacy Training Program: the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program for Human Rights Defenders from the Asia-Pacific Region and Indigenous Australia

This annual three-week comprehensive human rights and advocacy training course provides a solid foundation of knowledge of the international human rights framework and the UN System, as well as building practical advocacy, media and internet skills. The course will take place in Sydney and Canberra from November 24th - December 12th. For more information:

<http://www.dtp.unsw.edu.au/>

Applications must be received by 5 September 2008.

#### Behind the Ballot Box

In the lead up to the 2008 Local Government Elections, the Education Section of the NSW Parliament is offering a free two-hour course on the voting system and the role of the Parliament.

Wednesday 3 Sept, 10am-12noon OR Friday 12 September 10am-12noon

Where: Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney

Booking essential: [education@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:education@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

#### Human Rights and Reconciliation: Bridging the gap in times of transition

Professor Stephan Parmentier, Faculty of Law, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, and Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, will offer concluding observations

**Date:** Thursday, 25th September 2008, 6:15pm sharp.

**Venue:** Law Theatre, Law Building, UNSW, Kensington

**RSVP:** [ahrc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:ahrc@unsw.edu.au) by Thursday, 18th September 2008