

Professor George Williams
Chair
Human Rights Consultation Committee
Department of Justice
55 St Andrews Place
EAST MELBOURNE 3002
humanrights@justice.vic.gov.au

11th August 2005

Dear Professor Williams

Please find enclosed a submission in response to the Human Rights Consultation Community Discussion Paper. The submission has been prepared from the outcomes of a workshop on 'Protecting Human Rights in Australia' held as part of the Third National *Now We the People* Conference in Melbourne on 30-31 July 2005. The full Workshop Report is provided as Appendix 1 at the end of the submission.

'Now We The People' is a national organisation, based in Sydney, which 'brings together a wide range of institutions, movements and individuals to try to make a difference to the direction of Australian society and a contribution to a global movement for justice and ecological sustainability'. NWTP's website is at <http://www.nowwethepeople.org/>

The conference was attended by over 300 people, from many different backgrounds including: health, education, academic, law, trade union, indigenous people, the peace movement, the community and non-government sector, environment, political parties, churches and media.

The human rights workshop was attended by 39 people, and was conducted 'interactively', using the ZING process. This is, in effect, a form of electronic focus group, designed to maximise individual contributions and enable everyone's view to be treated equally; responses are projected and recorded instantaneously (see appendix 2 for more details).

Facilitation was by:

- Professor Mike Salvaris, Institute for Community Engagement, Victoria University
- Ms Sarah Nicholson, Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Ms Lindy Bracey, Footscray Primary School
- Mr Ken Schmack, Footscray Primary School.

At the end of the session, participants unanimously agreed that this report should be forwarded by the Federation of Community Legal Centres as a submission from the 39 participants, to the current Victorian government consultation on human rights.

The workshop was constituted around responses to the following nine key questions:

1. What do human rights mean to you and why are they important?
2. How would you rate the health or strength of human rights in Australia today on a scale 0 (appalling) to 10 (extraordinarily good)?

3. In Australia today, what are the most serious human rights problems or failures, and which groups are most vulnerable from a human rights perspective?
4. How would you summarise in a sentence the attitudes of most Australians today to human rights (positive or negative)?
5. What do you think are the most serious obstacles that prevent stronger human rights in Australia?
6. Invent a good slogan for a national public education campaign to promote human rights.
7. What are the most effective legal and constitutional actions or strategies to strengthen human rights in Australia?
8. What are the most effective actions and strategies to strengthen human rights in other areas (political, community, education, union, bureaucracy, research etc)?
9. Describe in a sentence or two your vision or ideal for human rights in Australia in 20 years time.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Mike Salvaris at Victoria University.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Nicholson
Policy Officer
Federation of Community Legal Centres