

## Australian NGOs Voice Human Rights Concerns to the UN

96 NGOs have alerted the UN Human Rights Committee (the Committee) to the most pressing human rights issues facing Australia. In 2013, the Committee will review Australia's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Joint NGO submission identifies issues that should be prioritised in the review.

Australia's continuing violation of the rights of asylum seekers is highlighted in the submission. Anna Cody, Director of Kingsford Legal Centre, said "The Australian Government is breaching the human rights of asylum seekers by extending offshore processing.

"Numerous United Nations human rights bodies have told the government it must change its policies to meet basic international human rights to health, to freedom from arbitrary detention and inhuman and degrading treatment. Yet the Government continues to violate international law in this area."

Another key concern of the submission involves the Stronger Futures legislation scheme. Michael Smith, National Convenor of the National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc (NACLC) said, "The large number of community organisations endorsing this submission remain highly concerned about the impact of the Stronger Futures Act on highly disadvantaged communities.

"The lack of both meaningful consultation and a credible evidence base for these intrusive measures is highly disappointing as it impacts on people's daily lives and is inconsistent with Australia's international human rights obligations."

The UN Committee has also previously noted the under-funding of legal assistance service and the flow-on consequences for access to justice. "There is chronic under-funding of legal assistance services in Australia, despite repeated government inquiries and the clear need for a real legal safety net," Mr Smith said.

"Community Legal Centres, legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women affected by family violence are overwhelmed by demand. Without access to legal services, justice is just a hollow promise."

The Joint NGO submission is available at:

[http://www.naclc.org.au/cb\\_pages/news/JointAustralianNGOSubmissiontoUNHumanRightsCommittee.php](http://www.naclc.org.au/cb_pages/news/JointAustralianNGOSubmissiontoUNHumanRightsCommittee.php)

The Australian Government is scheduled to report to the UN Human Rights Committee in March 2013.

### **About NACLC**

NACLC is the peak national organisation representing Community Legal Centres (CLCs) in Australia. CLCs are independently operating not-for-profit community organisations that provide legal and related services to the public, focusing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs.

### **About Kingsford Legal Centre**

Kingsford Legal Centre is an award winning community legal centre providing free legal advice and help to people who live, work or study in the Randwick and Botany local government areas in New South Wales. KLC also provides a state wide service in discrimination law.

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