

Australian Human Rights Commission

Statement by Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher, President of the AHRC, to the UPR Info Virtual Pre-session 37 for Australia

I, Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher, make this statement on behalf of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australia's A status NHRI.

During Australia's last cycle of the UPR in 2015, Australia received 290 recommendations. The Commission has assessed that approximately 11% of those supported by the government have been fully implemented, 80% partly and 9% not implemented.

We welcome the ratification of OPCAT and the passage of marriage equality legislation in 2017.

We also note areas where there remains work to be done to fully implement our human rights obligations.

We are concerned that the approach to human rights in Australia is reactive and ad hoc—without data and human rights indicators to assess progress.

There are minimal protections in place to ensure that human rights are considered as part of everyday law and policy making; and to prevent breaches before they occur.

There remain significant challenges to address the situation faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Closed immigration detention continues to be used for extensive periods, with significant mental health impacts on people found to be asylum seekers.

As with the rest of the world, Australia has grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic for much of 2020 and we have lost around 900 lives, with older Australians disproportionately affected.

But we have not experienced such widespread impacts as many other nations around the world—because Australian governments have acted quickly with significant emergency restrictions to preserve life.

But we would benefit from having more transparent, systemic tools to analyse the human rights impacts and ensure that the emergency intrusion on other rights is fully justified at all times to build public trust and accountability.

We identify the main human rights challenges for Australia—and the existing inequalities that are at risk of being exacerbated in a time of economic recession in the slow recovery from the pandemic—especially for women and older Australians.

I commend to you [our submission](#) and [other resources](#) for this UPR appearance. We have made 48 recommendations and prepared comprehensive briefing materials across all areas of human rights. You can learn more on [our website](#).

Thank you.

Please contact the Australian Human Rights Commission for more information at upr@humanrights.gov.au