

Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities

Communique – October 2022

The Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA) which comprises the State, Territory and Federal human rights and discrimination authorities, met via videoconference on 13 and 14 October 2022 to consider a number of issues of common concern and interest. The ACHRA members listed at the end of this document endorse the following statements.

National approach to human rights issues

ACHRA appreciated meeting with the Commonwealth Attorney General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP to discuss ACHRA's work and priority issues, and to explore opportunities to work alongside the Commonwealth Government to protect and promote human rights.

COVID-19 human rights and discrimination impacts

The significant human rights issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic remain a concern for ACHRA's COVID-19 Human Rights Working Group. Despite the pandemic having evolved in 2022, cohorts who are already marginalised continue to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and the pandemic response. During the pandemic recovery, ACHRA will work with State, Territory and Federal Governments to reflect and learn from the human rights issues that arose during the pandemic.

Sexual harassment and gender equality

ACHRA endorses the implementation of recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* Report and is represented on the Respect@Work Council by Dr Helen Watchirs, President and Human Rights Commissioner of the ACT Human Rights Commission. ACHRA members look forward to the launch of the Respect@Work online portal later in 2022. The portal will provide resources and information to individuals, organisations and industries to improve workplace gender equality.

Human rights in closed environments

Addressing human rights matters in places of detention remains one of ACHRA's focus areas. The Australian Human Rights Commission continues to work with the Australian Government to meet international standards in the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) treaty. To this end, ACHRA members are contributing to the setup of National Preventive Mechanisms to look into the treatment of people in detention, make recommendations to strengthen protections and comment on proposed law reforms. ACHRA members are also advocating to ban the use of spit hoods in custodial settings.

IncludeAbility

Protecting human rights for people with disability is central to ACHRA's work. ACHRA endorses IncludeAbility, an initiative led by Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, which focuses on developing meaningful employment opportunities for people with disability.

Human Rights Conference at Sydney WorldPride 2023

Many ACHRA members will participate in the three-day LGBTIQ+ Human Rights Conference in March 2023 and will be involved in an ACHRA activation space. The conference will bring people together from across the world to tackle LGBTIQ+ issues and effect positive change.

For further information, contact the following ACHRA members:

ACT	Dr Helen Watchirs, ACT President and Human Rights Commissioner Karen Toohey, ACT Discrimination Commissioner	02 6205 2222
NSW	Helen McKenzie, President Mia Zahra, Executive Manager, Anti-Discrimination NSW	02 9268 5514
NT	Sally Sievers, Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner	08 8999 1444
QLD	Scott McDougall, Queensland Human Rights Commissioner	07 3021 9123
SA	Jodeen Carney, South Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner	08 7322 7070
TAS	Sarah Bolt, Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner	03 6165 7515
VIC	Ro Allen (ACHRA Chair), Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner	0437 084 175
WA	Dr John Byrne, Western Australian Commissioner for Equal Opportunity	08 9216 3900
AHRC	Leanne Smith, Chief Executive	02 9284 9600