



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Our Ref: JD:HumanRights:VK:583817

13 June 2012

The Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Attorney-General
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Attorney-General,

Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011 and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

I write to you on behalf of the Human Rights Committee ('Committee') of the Law Society of NSW which has the responsibility to consider and monitor Australia's obligations under international law in respect of human rights; to consider reform proposals and draft legislation with respect to issues of human rights; and to advise the Law Society on any proposed changes.

The Committee congratulates the Government on the passage of the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011* as well as the establishment of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. The Committee notes that this legislation and the new Joint Committee represent a significant advancement in the protection and promotion of human rights in Australia.

The Committee takes this opportunity to note that in Australia's Human Rights Framework, the Government committed to a "review of existing legislation, policies and practices" for human rights compliance, and respectfully submits that this task could be referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. Your views are sought on this proposal. If that reference is not appropriate, the Committee would appreciate your advice on how you envisage that proposed review taking place. The Committee notes that you have also corresponded with the Law Council of Australia on the issue of legislative and policy review for human rights compliance.

While the Committee is disappointed that the Government has not accepted the recommendation of the Brennan Committee to introduce national human rights legislation similar to the British and Victorian models, the Committee views the passage of the Parliamentary scrutiny legislation as an important step which will enhance the understanding of, and adherence to, Australia's human rights obligations.

The Committee particularly welcomes the Government's reaffirmation of its commitment to upholding Australia's obligations under the seven international human rights treaties referred to in the National Human Rights Framework and looks forward to assisting with the continuous improvement of human rights protection and promotion in Australia.

Yours sincerely,


Justin Dowd
President

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