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Civil society unites behind call for a Human Rights Act for South Australia

Today, on Human Rights Day, an alliance of civil society organisations has come together to call for the enactment of a South Australian Human Rights Act that legally protects the dignity and interests of all South Australians.

Significant momentum has been building for more widespread legislative protection of human rights across Australia. The Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Queensland have already enshrined human rights in Acts of Parliament. The South Australian Parliament is currently conducting an Inquiry into the Potential for a Human Rights Act for SA. The [Report](#) of the federal Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework, released in May 2024, not only recommended the enactment of a federal Human Rights Act, it emphasised the need for states like South Australia to move towards introducing their own human rights legislation.

The South Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and the Rights Resource Network are united in the call for law reform, and they are not alone.

Dr. Sarah Moulds, RRNSA Convenor said: "We are grateful that South Australia's Parliamentarians are willing to listen to individuals and organisations who share our vision and we commend the establishment of the Social Development Committee's public Inquiry into the Potential for a Human Rights Act for South Australia. This Inquiry is currently conducting the essential work of reviewing the effectiveness of our existing laws and mechanisms for protecting human rights and considering the improvements that SA could make. Our state now has an opportunity to put in place laws that live up to the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by protecting the wellbeing of everyone in SA and sending a message to our children and young people that we care about their future, and we're prepared to do the hard work to create lasting social change."

South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly said

"When describing the community and world they want to live in, children and young people focus on equality, fairness, and respect. A Human Rights Act would uphold these values and ensure leaders, decision makers, organisations and service providers consider children's rights as core business rather than as an afterthought. A Human Rights Act for South Australia should recognise and address poverty as a structural barrier to realising children's rights, uphold children's participation, consider the impacts of today on the children of future generations and establish ways to embed children's rights within education settings."

Executive Director of Shelter SA, Dr Alice Clark said: "While homelessness exists, South Australia is abrogating its commitment to human rights. Australia is a signatory to various human rights treaties that include the right to an adequate standard of living, food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The right to housing and the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health are intrinsically linked. Adequate shelter does not mean just a roof over your head, it means access to appropriate privacy, space, security, lighting, ventilation, basic infrastructure, location and facilities, all at a reasonable cost. As evidenced by the growing number of people experiencing homelessness and living with housing stress, the human right to housing is not assured in South Australia."

A human rights act that includes the right to housing, would represent a significant step forward in assuring the dignity and quality of life of our citizens.”

Human Rights Act for South Australia is a joint civil society coalition initiated by the South Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and the Rights Resource Network of SA. 153 organisations and experts have endorsed the Coalition’s statement, [Proposing a Human Rights Law for South Australia](#).

The Coalition groups have written to the Premier of SA, the Hon Peter Malinauskas MP, seeking a meeting in the New Year to discuss the outcomes of the Social Development Committee Inquiry.

Submissions and evidence taken by the SDC are available [here](#).

A list of case studies that evidence the benefits that Human Rights Acts are delivering in the ACT, Victoria and QLD is available [here](#).

The Designing a Human Rights Framework for South Australia Report issued by the Rights Resource Network SA (RRNSA) in February 2022 is [available here](#).

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