

Committee information

Under the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011* (the Act), the committee's functions are to examine bills, Acts and legislative instruments for compatibility with human rights, and report to both Houses of the Parliament. The committee may also inquire into and report on any human rights matters referred to it by the Attorney-General.

The committee assesses legislation for compatibility with the human rights set out in seven international treaties to which Australia is a party.¹ The committee's *Guide to Human Rights* provides a short and accessible overview of the key rights contained in these treaties which the committee commonly applies when assessing legislation.²

The establishment of the committee builds on Parliament's tradition of legislative scrutiny. The committee's scrutiny of legislation seeks to enhance understanding of, and respect for, human rights in Australia and ensure attention is given to human rights issues in legislative and policy development.

Some human rights obligations are absolute under international law. However, most rights may be limited as long as it meets certain standards. Accordingly, a focus of the committee's reports is to determine whether any limitation on rights is permissible. In general, any measure that limits a human right must comply with the following limitation criteria: be prescribed by law; be in pursuit of a legitimate objective; be rationally connected to (that is, effective to achieve) its stated objective; and be a proportionate way of achieving that objective.

Chapter 1 of the reports include new and continuing matters. Where the committee considers it requires further information to complete its human rights assessment it will seek a response from the relevant minister, or otherwise draw any human rights concerns to the attention of the relevant minister and the Parliament. Chapter 2 of the committee's reports examine responses received in relation to the committee's requests for information, on the basis of which the committee has concluded its examination of the legislation.

¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

² See the committee's [Guide to Human Rights](#). See also the committee's guidance notes, in particular [Guidance Note 1 – Drafting Statements of Compatibility](#).

Membership of the committee

Members

Mr Josh Burns MP, Chair	Macnamara, Victoria, ALP
Mr Henry Pike MP, Deputy Chair	Bowman, Queensland, LNP
Senator Karen Grogan	South Australia, ALP
Mr Peta Murphy MP	Dunkley, Victoria, ALP
Senator Matt O'Sullivan	Western Australia, LP
Mr Graham Perrett MP	Moreton, Queensland, ALP
Senator Gerard Rennick	Queensland, LNP
Senator Jana Stewart	Victoria, ALP
Senator Lidia Thorpe	Victoria, IND
Ms Kylea Tink MP	North Sydney, New South Wales, IND

Secretariat

Anita Coles, Committee Secretary
Charlotte Fletcher, Principal Research Officer
Rebecca Preston, Principal Research Officer
Geoffrey Fricke, Senior Research Officer (A/g)
Rashmi Chary, Legislative Research Officer

Committee legal adviser

Associate Professor Jacqueline Mowbray

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