



HUMANIST SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

(Reg. No. A0020272M)

Affiliated with the Council of Australian Humanist Societies (CAHS)
and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), London, UK

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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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Parliament House
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Migration Amendment (Strengthening Biometrics Integrity) Bill 2014

The Humanist Society of Victoria (HSV) is a secular organisation whose members foster an ethical, rational and responsible approach to life. HSV supports human rights, democratic processes, and a just and inclusive governance.

HSV seeks to alleviate suffering, to promote well-being and the circumstances where all individuals can attain their full potential. It engages in educational and charitable activities.

The views that follow have been formulated at specially convened group discussions to which all HSV members are invited. Further supportive evidence has been obtained from print publications, the Internet, the mass media and from individuals with relevant experience.

The Secretary, Vice-President and Submissions Conveners of the HSV are authorised to present these views.

9 April 2015.

Dear Secretary,

Victorian Humanists congratulate the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on their initiative to establish this inquiry, and we thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Humanists uphold the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other international statutes which place responsibilities upon governments to protect the human rights of all people.

We therefore ask that all sections of the proposed legislation conform to the highest world-class standards of human rights as defined under international convention and treaty.

We express concern over potential consequences of this Bill and ask that its parameters be strengthened to ensure the following.

1. **Privacy.** We ask that privacy and personal integrity be guaranteed. The government's track record on protecting the personal digital information of asylum seekers demonstrates a consequential need for greater vigilance and accountability.
2. **Guaranteed Processing Without Prejudice.** We ask that the Bill should guarantee fair, timely and due processing for all people, including those whose biometric data may prove to be unhelpful in their applications for entry into Australia.

This includes the need to guarantee that entry or travel will not be refused to anyone simply because their baseline biometric data might be unavailable. Their right to travel, emigrate and seek asylum are all guaranteed under international standards of human rights law.

3. **Protection of Human Life and Human Rights.** We seek a guarantee that biometric data will not be used to prejudice processes of natural law, endanger personal safety, nor assist in the *refoulement* of anyone seeking asylum.

We ask for the Parliament's commitment to ensure legislation which is commensurate with our nation's moral and legal integrity to uphold human rights.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Stuart
Secretary
Humanist Society of Victoria Inc.