

Foreword

I am pleased to provide this first Annual Report of the work of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights in the 43rd Parliament.

The establishment of the committee in the 43rd Parliament builds on an established tradition of legislative scrutiny within the Parliament and enhances the advice and analysis available to the Parliament in its consideration of legislation.

I commend the committee and its Chair, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, for fostering a collegiate and bipartisan approach to the committee's work. The committee established a robust analytical framework that enables it to focus on the assessment of legislation against Australia's human rights obligations in an objective and measured way.

From its inception, the committee has seen itself as part of a wider set of processes contributing to the development of legislation that balances policy objectives and human rights obligations. The committee's engagement with the sponsors of legislation has emphasised the importance of maintaining an effective dialogue that can contribute to an appropriate regard for human rights in the development of policy and legislation. The committee's practice of writing to Ministers to seek further information before forming a view on the human rights implications of legislation underpins this dialogue. In this way, the committee hopes to contribute to a clear understanding of how rights might be engaged in legislative measures and what safeguards might be necessary where such measures seek to limit rights.

The work of the committee in the 43rd Parliament provides a firm footing for the ongoing consideration of human rights by Parliament. I look forward to working with the committee to build on this foundation and continue this important work in the 44th Parliament.

Senator Dean Smith

Chair

