

## Disadvantaged demand Human Rights Act: PILCH

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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The Public Interest Law Clearing House (**PILCH**) says the elderly, people experiencing homelessness, refugees and other marginalised and disadvantaged groups will continue to experience significant human rights violations unless the Federal Government enacts a Human Rights Act.

PILCH Acting Executive Director, Mat Tinkler, said PILCH has made a number of substantial submissions to the National Human Rights Consultation, informed by its significant pro bono legal work advising disadvantaged clients.

‘Clients routinely walk through our door with stories of violations to their basic human rights – people experiencing homelessness, the elderly, asylum seekers, people with a disability and racial and religious minorities are just some of the people that our present laws fail to protect adequately,’ said Mr Tinkler.

‘Our submissions to the Consultation have been informed by the experiences of these people, and their plights clearly demonstrate that Australia needs a Human Rights Act that enshrines fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Parliamentary accountability means little to someone who is about to be evicted into homelessness – a Human Rights Act will improve the practices of government and promote a “fair go” for all Australians.’

‘PILCH also recognises that a Human Rights Act will not, of itself, address all of the inadequacies of the current system. Any such Act must be accompanied by a range of other measures, including investing in human rights education; improving access to justice; and, leveraging the Government’s significant purchasing power to promote human rights-friendly practices,’ said Mr Tinkler.

Meanwhile, the PILCH Homeless Persons’ Legal Clinic (**HPLC**) has drawn upon its own consultations with 145 people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to inform its submission.

‘The HPLC took the question of human rights protection directly to people experiencing homelessness, and they have definitively called for better human rights protections,’ said Caroline Adler, Manager & Principal Lawyer of the HPLC.

‘80% of participants reported having being treated in a cruel or degrading way while experiencing homelessness, 85% said that accommodation and housing services in Australia are inadequate, and 99% said that the law must change to better protect their basic human rights.’

‘People experiencing homelessness endure violations of their human rights on a daily basis. These violations provide clear evidence that human rights are not sufficiently protected and promoted in Australia,’ said Ms Adler.

### Contact

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