

International Human Rights

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Australian Democrats have an unwavering commitment to the protection of human rights, not only within Australia but throughout the world.

Human rights are universal. They apply equally to every human being, regardless of race, gender, age, religion or sexuality.

Every country has an obligation to protect human rights within its own borders, but not all countries accept this obligation equally. This is why it is important for the international community to work together to protect rights of all human beings.

Our Action Plan

- Reinforce Australia's responsibility to protect human rights both at home and abroad by making it clear that our commitment to human rights is non-negotiable
- Implement Australia's international human rights commitments by incorporating all international obligations into domestic legislation
- Propagate human rights within the Asia-Pacific region by encouraging a strong regional dialogue and robust approach to protecting and promoting human rights

"The Australian Democrats will continue to push human rights concerns to the forefront of debate in Australian politics"

**Senator
Natasha Stott Despoja
Spokesperson on
Attorney General's and
Foreign Affairs**

The Issues

Australia's international obligations

Australia has a responsibility to protect human rights both at home and abroad. We need to make it clear that our commitment to human rights is non-negotiable. This means we will not ignore human rights abuses for the sake of trade, economic or security deals with other countries.

The Democrats believe Australia should strive to be a global leader in our unwavering commitment to human rights. This means leading the way by signing onto significant human rights agreements and conventions and by ensuring that we have an impeccable human rights record at home.

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Domestic human rights

For too long, the Howard Government has paid lip service to Australia's policy level commitment to human rights by failing to ensure that international human rights obligations are incorporated into domestic legislation.

A number of domestic human rights issues impact upon Australia's reputation overseas. For example, Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, Indigenous people, and marginalised and disadvantaged people at the fringes of society such as the homeless.

Australia is one of the only democracies in the western world without a Bill of Rights, for which the Australian Democrats have long campaigned. The Democrats consider that a Bill of Rights is a crucial step in establishing Australia's international credentials and will significantly enhance Australia's negotiating position when advocating human rights in the region.

The Democrats will continue to campaign relentlessly to establish a federal Bill of Rights in Australia.

The Asia-Pacific Region

There are a range of serious human rights concerns within the Asia-Pacific region, from the persecution of Tibetans, Falun Gong practitioners and Christians within China, to restrictions on freedom of speech in Vietnam.

At Australia's own doorstep, there is evidence of ongoing human rights violations within West Papua and Aceh. Not to mention the violations being perpetrated by our own Government, for example, locking up families who have fled from persecution.

By virtue of Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific, we have a special responsibility to combat human rights violations in this region. The Democrats believe that Australia should use its relationship with its neighbours to raise concerns about human rights violations.

Although we need to be conscious of the political sensitivities in the region, we should never let these sensitivities compromise our commitment to human rights.

The Democrats will continue to work hard to ensure that Australia fulfils its human rights obligations and regains its position as a global leader on human rights.