



13 November 2009

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of Australia
House of Representatives
PO Box 6022
CANBERRA ACT 2600

E-mail: via www.pm.gov.au

Subject: A Human Rights Act for Australians

Dear Prime Minister

The Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) is the state peak body for non-government organisations (NGOs) working for mental health throughout NSW representing the views and interests of over 200 NGOs. Member organisations specialise in the provision of services and support for people with a disability as a consequence of mental illness. MHCC provides leadership and representation to its membership and seeks to improve, promote and develop quality mental health services to the community.

Facilitating effective linkages between government, non-government and private sectors, MHCC participate extensively in public policy development. The organisation consults broadly across all sectors in order to respond to legislative reform and sits on National, State (NSW) and State Government Department (NSW) committees and boards in order to affect systemic change.

During the period in which the National Human Rights Consultation Committee conducted their inquiry, our organisation consulted widely with the mental health sector. We provided a lengthy submission to the Committee which included many case studies which described consumers' experiences of human rights violations that go unprotected in Australia. Other improvements to the existing human rights protections would continue to be defective in the absence of a Human Rights Act. Such an Act would also serve as an important symbolic statement of Australian values and would reinforce our national identity.

Without reservation, in the consultations we conducted, the sector supported the recommendations of the Brennan Committee Report and we urge you and your government to progress the recommendations widely supported by our sector and the community broadly. Enacting a Human Rights Act is an opportunity for your government to show leadership in the area of human rights, something that is an expectation of those who supported a change of government two years ago. It will demonstrate that you are listening to the greatest majority of the Australian people, and is an important gesture to the international community, making good our commitment to embody the rights in Australia that we have ratified in numerous International agreements and covenants, and by so doing meet our obligations under international law.

MHCC look forward to the announcement in the coming months that you and the Australian Government will support and implement the recommendations of the National Human Rights Consultation committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jenna Bateman', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jenna Bateman
Chief Executive Officer