

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)
Subject: Submission
Date: Monday, 18 April 2016 3:28:52 PM

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make the following submission in support of a Human Rights Act for Queensland.

My Background: I was from 1985-1990 the Co-ordinator of the Teaching for Human Rights Project (Queensland Division). Participation of Queensland State Schools in the Project being banned by the Bjelke-Petersen State Government, the Project was offered to and accepted by the non-state schools sector and housed at Brisbane Catholic Education. Anglican Archbishop Sir John Grindrod and Catholic Archbishop Francis Rush were joint Patrons of the Project, which was accessed by all Anglican and Roman Catholic schools across Queensland. Over 200 primary and secondary schools and colleges participated in the project as well as seven non-denominational grammar schools and colleges. Professor Fazal Rizvi, Dean of Education at The University of Queensland, chaired the Queensland Steering Committee for the Project and the National Co-ordinator of the Project was Professor Ralph Pettman of the Human Rights & Equal Opportunities Commission.

The Focus of the Project: This was to enhance an awareness among young Queenslanders about the importance of human rights. Small grants were made available to each school enabling research projects to be conducted on how this could be done. In some instances individual groups of teachers chose to focus on their own pedagogic practice so as to monitor how respectful of human rights (of students as well as of topics under study) their practice was. At the end of the Project a Final Report was published accounting for the findings from each school in relation to their participation in the Project. There were in toto ninety-six project reports that were published from the Queensland leg of the Project.

The Findings of the Project: Although this exercise was conducted a quarter of a century ago it constitutes the only educational project with a focus on advancing the discourse of human rights both across the Queensland curriculum as well as in teacher pedagogical practice. As such the observation was made, again and again, that both the content knowledge of students in relation to what constitutes human rights and why they are important, as well as a list of pedagogical practices that cohere with the formal and informal teaching of such values, was parsimonious to say the least. Many school principals, in particular, emphasised how important both aspects of the project were to the general human rights climate of their schools. The project was particularly efficacious as a foundation for dramatic changes in school practice that followed the transition from separate special needs educational arrangements and the much more highly integrated and seamless arrangement that is now called 'Inclusive Education'.

Conclusion: As the key Officer in charge of co-ordinating the Project, my view is that human rights cannot just be a discourse that relies on it being imposed when breaches of the law in its respect become obvious. Moreover, as the experiences

of legislators and law enforcement officers in New South Wales and Victoria now show, considerable confusion and potential overlap currently exists between state and federal human rights and anti-discrimination jurisdictions, with many cases seen as anomalous and 'falling between the gaps' in our growing public discourse of what constitutes discrimination, particularly in respect of the treatment of LGTBIQ students. A major stumbling block to the teaching of safety standards in schools is also the absence of legislation to support such an initiative, while the suicide rates, attributed to bullying, of students who belong to the above categories, have risen and become better known and, appropriately, of much more immediate concern in the public arena. The media too is better prepared and willing to open up such issues for public discussion of this developing human rights agenda. It will therefore take state-based legislation.....subsidiarist, consultative, with a public education component to it, and enforceable by the state legislature, executive and judiciary, to monitor progress and register improvement on this account. But, first and foremost, it will need a Human Rights Act to advance it.

Submission made by:

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