

## 2020 ALGA National General Assembly Motion

### **Motion:**

**That** Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly:

- (1) Support the Australian Human Rights Commission's call for a National Charter of Human Rights.

### **National Objective:**

Currently, Australia does not have a stand-alone legislation that protects, promotes and respects the basic human rights of all people.

A National Charter of Human Rights would strengthen and could extend existing human rights protections for all Australians into a single Act and this would have particular significance for the most marginalised in our communities.

The national discussion regarding the proposed Religious Freedoms Bill has highlighted the need for a comprehensive discussion about the promotion and protection of human rights. This would include a human rights charter that properly covers and better balances rights, so that people are free to practice their beliefs without extending that freedom of religious practice to include a freedom to discriminate against others.

### **Summary of Key Arguments:**

We all want to live in a society that is fair and where everyone can thrive. Protection of basic human rights is critical to this, as are clear responsibilities for government and community to ensure everyone has equal opportunities in life.

Local councils constantly engage with the diverse range of people who make up their communities, including children, families, people with disability, older people, migrants and refugees. Local Government plays an important role in protecting, respecting and promoting a wide range of basic human rights and have a critical role to play in educating and raising community awareness on matters including human rights.

Both Victoria and ACT bring the experience of more than a decade working with and to a Human Rights Charter; the most recent *Report on the Operations of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2018* (released by the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) evidences the significant strengthening of human rights protections for Victorians over that time.

Based on the current Victorian Charter model, a National Charter of Rights would mean that governments would have to consider people's human rights when creating new laws and policies and when delivering services – like aged care, Medicare, disability services, and education funding. Furthermore, people would have the power to hold governments to account when they breach human rights.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's Free and Equal campaign will soon release recommend priorities for reforming federal discrimination law to make it more effective, comprehensive and fairer in its protection, and simpler to understand. This presents a clear opportunity to pursue the introduction of new national legislation such a National Charter of Rights.

## **2020 ALGA National General Assembly Motion**

### **Motion:**

**That** the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly:

- (1) Calls on the federal government to accept its obligations as a member of the international community and treat asylum seekers with compassion, care and dignity.
- (2) Release all refugee and asylum seekers being held in immigration detention into the Australian community, so they can live without harm and fear as part of the broader community while applications are being processed.

### **National Objective:**

Australia has one of the most multicultural populations in the world with more than 300 different ancestries and 28% of our resident population born overseas - nearly 7 million people. Across the country more than 300 languages are spoken. This includes refugee and asylum seeker communities.

The continued success of multicultural Australia as an equitable, diverse and healthy civil society is shaped by how humanely we respond to global settlement needs and the domestic processing of refugee and asylum seekers applications.

The Federal Government continues to ignore its obligation to protect the human rights of asylum seekers by continuing the unfair and inhumane practice of indefinite detention of vulnerable people in the processing of asylum claims.

We join Australia's international aid organisations, community partners and local community in calling on the Federal Government to put in place more compassionate solutions to detention that reflects moral and legal obligations as a signatory of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention).

### **Summary of Key Arguments:**

Prolonged time in offshore and onshore detention continues to have a significant toll on the health and wellbeing of refugees and people seeking asylum.

ALGA works closely with the Commonwealth and state governments in the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers so that appropriate support services, such as housing, education, health and trauma counselling are provided in a coordinated and strategic manner. Achieving positive settlement outcomes and integration into the community are important for the stability and prosperity of communities.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has repeatedly noted concerns about Australia failing to meet its responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers. The Australian government must close detention centres both offshore and onshore and as humane alternative and to enable community-based options that protects the dignity, health and wellbeing of men, women and children seeking refuge and asylum in this country

### **2020 ALGA National General Assembly Motion**

#### **Motion:**

**That** the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Broaden and strengthen Australia's product stewardship schemes so that a much wider range of products are covered, including textiles, electronics and consumer goods, which will stop the costs of disposing of goods being born by everyone in the community and instead mean that companies responsible for producing the goods are responsible for their disposal costs.

- (1) Set targets and legislation to phase out the use of new materials for use in products and packaging in Australia (except for essential needs such as some medical uses)
- (2) Ban the import and production of hard-to-recycle materials (except for essential needs such as some medical uses)
- (3) Ensure that there are effective standards for the quality of recycled materials used in Australia
- (4) Set high minimum recycled content procurement targets in all levels of government

#### **National objective**

With the urgencies of the waste crisis and climate emergency, it is imperative that industry is properly encouraged and empowered to find solutions to problems in their area. Product stewardship arrangements are a great opportunity for industry to take charge of the sustainable management of products and can lead to significant change.

#### **Summary of key arguments**

There is much untapped potential for governments to further enhance these product stewardship arrangements. New product stewardship schemes could help tackle environmental issues across many known areas. For example, textiles are a highly problematic waste stream, with currently little overarching industry coordination to achieve sustainability goals. Also, previous examples have taught us that product stewardship arrangements are far more effective when they are backed up by legislation and government policies.