



MEDIA RELEASE

Human rights committee to scrutinise COVID-19 related legislation

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights has resolved it will continue to meet and report to the Parliament regularly over the coming months so that it can fulfil its important role in scrutinising legislation. Specifically, it has resolved that it will pay particular attention to scrutinising laws relating to the COVID-19 response.

The Committee Chair, Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson, said: “While it has been necessary to curtail many of the functions of Parliament during this pandemic, our committee is continuing its important work of assessing the human rights compatibility of all federal legislation, including that relating to COVID-19.”

Deputy Chair, Mr Graham Perrett MP, said: “During this unprecedented time, it is more important than ever that the human rights committee scrutinise laws impacting on all Australians.”

Under the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*, the committee is empowered to scrutinise all legislation, including delegated legislation, for compatibility with human rights.

Australia’s human rights obligations require it to take effective measures to protect the rights to life and health, meaning it is essential that measures are taken to protect Australians from the spread of COVID-19. However, such measures must be demonstrated to be reasonable and proportionate.

While it is open to any person or organisation to correspond with the committee in relation to its work at any time, the committee has also resolved:

- that its next report will focus on federal COVID-19 related legislation for compatibility with human rights;
- to seek the views of a range of non-government organisations as to the human rights impact of federal COVID-19 related legislation;
- to write to ministers advising them of the committee’s ongoing work at this time, including the importance of having a detailed statement of compatibility with human rights for all COVID-19 related legislation; and
- to collate a list of all federal legislation relating to COVID-19 on its website.

15 April 2020

For further information: Please visit the committee's website: https://www.aph.gov.au/joint_humanrights/ or contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 3823 or by email to human.rights@aph.gov.au.