

MEDIA RELEASE

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Marist180 joins national call for a Human Rights Act to ensure fairer decisions for young Australians.

10 December 2025 – Human Rights Day

Australia is the only liberal democracy without a comprehensive National Human Rights Act, leaving rights protections fragmented and inconsistent. This gap means decisions in housing, education, justice, health and care systems often lack consistency and fairness, leaving young people vulnerable to harm and discrimination.

“On this International Human Rights Day, we’re proud to support the campaign for a Human Rights Act in Australia” said Patrick O’Reilly, Director Mission, Inclusion and Identity. “It gives Australia a practical tool to design better systems. When decision-makers have a clear set of rights to check their work against, outcomes improve, not just for young people, but for the whole community.” he said.

A Human Rights Act would provide a clear legal framework for governments and public services, ensuring rights are considered upfront and giving people a straightforward way to challenge harmful decisions. Evidence from other countries shows these laws improve decision-making, reduce harm, and strengthen public trust.

We believe a Human Rights Act would:

- **Guide fair decisions** by requiring all public bodies to consider human rights.
- **Improve services** by embedding dignity, equality and wellbeing into policies.
- **Ensure accountability** through accessible processes when rights are breached.
- **Benefit everyone**, especially young people who rely on public systems.

For more than 30 years, Marist180 has supported young people striving for stability and opportunity. We see the difference fair systems make every day, and the harm when rights are overlooked.

Mr O'Reilly added, *"This reform is achievable, practical and long overdue. It won't solve every challenge, but it gives Australia the structure we need to prevent harm and support better decisions."*

On Human Rights Day, Marist180 urges:

- Everyone to support A Human Rights Act Australia: <https://www.humanrightsact.org.au>
- The Australian Government to introduce a national Human Rights Act so every young person, and every member of our community, can rely on systems that respect and protect their rights.

At Marist180, we believe fairness should be built into every system that shapes young lives. A Human Rights Act is a practical, achievable reform that will make this possible. Together, we can create a future where every decision respects dignity and rights.

For more information about Marist180 – WWW.Marist180.org.au

For more information about Marist180's Human Rights Work – [Read our submission to the Government's draft National Report the UPR](#)

For more information about Human Rights Act Australia - <https://www.humanrightsact.org.au/>

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Opinion Editorial

Why Australia Needs a National Human Rights Act — and Why Young People Can't Wait

Australia remains the only liberal democracy without a comprehensive National Human Rights Act. This gap leaves rights protections fragmented and inconsistent, and it means decisions in housing, education, justice, health and care systems often lack fairness and transparency. For young people, the consequences can be profound.

On International Human Rights Day, Marist180 joins organisations across the country in calling for a national Human Rights Act, a reform that would embed fairness and accountability into public decision-making.

Why does this matter?

Every day, Marist180 works alongside young people whose lives are shaped by decisions made in public systems. When those decisions are inconsistent or not guided by clear human rights standards, young people can face avoidable harm, instability, and discrimination.

A Human Rights Act would change this. It would provide a clear framework that governments and public services must follow, a roadmap to ensure decisions are fair, rights are considered upfront, and people have a straightforward way to challenge harmful decisions.

What does the evidence say?

International experience is instructive. Countries with human rights legislation report improvements in the quality of government decisions, greater transparency, and stronger public trust. These laws also help resolve issues early, preventing problems from escalating and reducing costs for governments and communities.

As Patrick O'Reilly, Director of Mission, Inclusion and Identity, explains:

"On this International Human Rights Day, we're proud to support the campaign for a Human Rights Act. It gives Australia a practical tool to design better systems. When decision-makers have a clear set of rights to check their work against, outcomes improve, not just for young people, but for the whole community."

What would a Human Rights Act achieve?

- **Guide fair decision-making** by requiring all public bodies to consider human rights.
- **Improve public services** by embedding dignity, equality and wellbeing into policies.
- **Ensure accountability** through clear and accessible processes when rights are breached.
- **Benefit everyone**, especially young people who rely on public systems functioning fairly.

Why now?

This reform is achievable, practical and long overdue. A Human Rights Act won't solve every challenge, but it provides the structure needed to prevent harm and support better decisions. It's a foundation for a fairer future.

On Human Rights Day, Marist180 urges:

- Everyone to support A Human Rights Act Australia: <https://www.humanrightsact.org.au>
- The Australian Government to introduce a national Human Rights Act so every young person — and every member of our community — can rely on systems that respect and protect their rights.

Australia prides itself on fairness, yet without a national Human Rights Act, that promise remains incomplete. This reform is not radical, it's common sense. It's about building systems that protect dignity, prevent harm, and give every person, especially young people, a fair chance. On Human Rights Day, the question isn't whether we can afford to act, it's whether we can afford not to.

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