

Australia Day 2009

The Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

We congratulate you and your government on the extra attention paid to civil liberties issues during 2008, and your program of consultation on human rights and the proposed removing of sedition provisions, among other initiatives, during 2009.

There is a clear opportunity for you to take a significant step to entrench a greater national regard for civil liberties and human rights by creating a specific parliamentary committee with ongoing responsibility for this area. The other great parliamentary democracies of the world have such committees, but Australia does not.

Civil Liberties Australia proposes that you set up a Joint Standing Committee on Liberties and Rights.

This committee would monitor and report on Australia's international commitments to conventions, protocols and the like, and consider referrals from proposed legislation where liberties or rights were potentially compromised. It could function to ensure that all relevant legislation was compliant with civil liberties and human rights.

Establishing such a committee would send a clear signal to the nation of your personal commitment to making positive attitudinal and cultural change in Australia. It would be in keeping with the dramatic announcements towards a more liberties/rights-compliant culture in the USA made in the past week by the President, Mr Obama.

We commend the initiative to you. Should Mr Obama be visiting Australia in the coming year, he would be an appropriate person to co-preside at the first meeting of such a committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kristine Klugman  
President