

Will Queenslanders see their human rights being protected in 2020?

Today is International Human Rights Day and Community Legal Centres Queensland believes it is an opportunity for Queenslanders to stand with the international community to celebrate that from 1 January, a culture of human rights will be a day-to-day part of our lives.

The Queensland Human Rights Act seeks to promote a culture of human rights in the Queensland public sector. This Act will improve the way laws are made, and the ways Courts can interpret laws consistently with human rights norms.

Human Rights Acts have been operating in the ACT and Victoria for over a decade. People with disabilities, people with mental illness, marginalised groups and young people have all been able to seek protection from these laws.

While these Acts have not ended issues such as disability discrimination or homelessness, they have increased commitment from governments, businesses, community groups and the community to end these issues. This dialogue and cultural change approach embedded in the Act goes a long way to achieving long-term, systemic change in Queensland.

The lack of a structured human rights regime in Queensland has meant that up until now access to justice and equal opportunity has not always been a priority for decision makers. Appropriate implementation of the Act may go some way to helping Queenslanders achieve justice, however this can only be achieved with strong government support.

Janelle Rees, Sector Sustainably Co-ordinator, Community Legal Centres Queensland said, "A meaningful process is important to ensure people's rights are protected. Everyday people expect Government to act consistently and to make decisions considering human rights."

"Queensland's new human rights law will make meaningful change, but it's no silver bullet. Building a culture of human rights will take time, and this is an important milestone. Community legal centres welcome the commencement of the Act on 1 January 2020, as an important step forward, and a key mechanism to protect and promote Queenslanders' human rights," Ms Rees said.

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Community Legal Centres Queensland is the state-wide peak body representing community legal centres in Queensland. Queensland community legal centres have 40 years of service delivery experience providing free information, advice and referral, casework and representation to the community. www.communitylegalqld.org.au

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