

Thursday, 1 October 2020

Calling on government to support a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

In recognition of the International Day of Older Persons, the Law Council of Australia is providing in-principle support to the development of a *Convention on the Rights of Older Persons* and calls on the Federal Government to support the initiative.

Law Council President, Ms Pauline Wright, says that such a convention has the potential to play an important role in improving the lives of older people globally, and inform Australia's own domestic legal and policy frameworks.

"While other groups, such as women, children, and people with disability have been recognised as requiring specific attention, there is nothing that caters for the human rights of older persons as a distinct group," Ms Wright said.

"Their specific needs, experiences, and human rights should be reflected and articulated in a focused international treaty."

"By 2050, the United Nations projects that one in six people in the world will be over the age of 65, up from one in 11 in 2019."

"That is why it is appropriate to shine a light on how societies can uphold equality and dignity of this group, and learn from their wisdom and experience," Ms Wright said.

"Discussions of the rights of older persons, and renewed consideration of the development of a convention on the rights of older persons, are particularly timely in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely impacted many older persons globally, with international responses often falling short."

"We need to protect the human rights of older people – both in emergency settings, such as pandemics, and in everyday settings," Ms Wright said.

"While the Law Council is calling for a stronger legal framework at the international level, there is also a need to translate such obligations into our own domestic setting."

"The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has heard numerous accounts of serious human rights violations. That is one of the many reasons why the Law Council remains committed to the development of a federal human rights act, which has the potential to achieve positive outcomes for the protection of the rights of older persons amongst many other Australians," Ms Wright said.

Contact: Fiona Wade, P. 0403 810 865 E. fiona.wade@lawcouncil.asn.au

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