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## **Lack of political courage puts Australia among those nations with worst human rights protections in the world**

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Wednesday 21 April, 2010

“Lack of political courage by a government failing to act on the advice of those whose opinions it has sought, means Australia will be among those countries with the worst human rights protections in the world,” The Australian Lawyers Alliance warned today.

Alliance national president, Mark Blumer, said not only would the marginalised and disadvantaged suffer as a result, but now was the time for us, as a nation, to hang our collective heads in shame.

“This missed opportunity comes at a time when other nations are pondering Australia’s national psyche. Issues such as foreign national attacks; discriminatory policy towards asylum seekers; and a curbing of civil rights through tougher sentencing laws, reflect on us poorly as a nation,” Mr Blumer said.

“If we are, in fact, a true democracy, why is it that the government is comfortable forking out huge amounts of money on a consultation process and then disregarding what the public has had to say as part of that consultation?”

There were more than 40,000 submissions to the Human Rights Consultative Committee, 87 per cent of which were in favour of such an Act.”

Mr Blumer, speaking outside the National Press Club where the decision was announced, said the attorney-general’s rationale behind the decision was that it would somehow divide the community.

“This is political claptrap. What the attorney-general really meant was that he feared the power of conservative reporters in the media as well as Opposition spin at a time when the government was about to swing into election mode.

Mr Blumer said the label of Australia being the only democratic country in the world without a federal document protecting rights would now stick and more human rights abuses were likely under the medley of disconnected, shallow rights protections that would continue to exist.

“We have a history of human rights abuses intertwined in government policy with the White Australia Policy, the Stolen Generation and today with the Northern Territory Intervention, ‘stop and search powers’ and anti-association laws to name a few, Mr Blumer said.

“In contrast, jurisdictions that have introduced their own human rights Acts have seen improvements on a case-by-case basis when referred to the courts for consideration.

The only option Australians, in the remaining states and territories, now have is to lobby for a human rights Act in each of their own jurisdictions,” he said.

“Rights without protections are not rights, but rather privileges to be taken away by the powerful.”

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