



AASW
Australian Association
of Social Workers

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Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein
High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
New York Office

Dear Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) regarding our opposition to Australia's bid for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council.

As social workers, we share your unwavering commitment to human rights. We are dedicated to the pursuit of social justice, the enhancement of quality of life, and the development of the full potential of every individual, group and community in society. We believe that in order to achieve this, we must create inclusive societies where the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings is recognised and respected. Accordingly, as social workers we have a particular interest in stopping human rights abuses both locally and internationally.

Australia has an important history of protecting human rights, but the government's current policy direction has undermined this legacy. The treatment of asylum seekers, including children, in mandatory offshore detention combined with the historical and contemporary injustices committed against Indigenous Australians constitute significant human rights violations. As social workers, we see the consequences of these policies firsthand and they are having devastating impacts. We have advocated for a more humane approach, based on empathy and compassion.

It is because of this that we are opposed to Australia's bid for the Human Rights Council, unless there is a significant change in the current policy direction. Given the importance of the Human Rights Council and its leadership role, its membership must be made up of countries with a commitment and proven track record of protecting human rights. Sadly, Australia currently does not meet this standard.

We will continue to advocate against human rights violations and look forward to the day when the Australian government finally listens to the public and the world, and becomes a global leader for human rights.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Karen Healy AM
National President
Australian Association of Social Workers