

International Human Rights Day – 10 December

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the theme is “dignity and justice for all of us”.

The UDHR was proclaimed and adopted by the UN General Assembly sixty years ago. Since its adoption in 1948, the Declaration has been and continues to be a source of inspiration for national and international efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The UDHR is a living document that is important in times of conflict and suffering and also in addressing social injustice and achieving human dignity in times of peace. No matter where you live, how much money you have, what faith you practice or political views you hold, all the human rights in the Declaration apply to you, everywhere, always.

Human rights are about recognising and respecting the inherent value and dignity of all people. Human rights entail both rights and obligations.



Human rights principles are contained in internationally agreed human rights standards.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is responsible for promoting and encouraging protection of human rights in Australia.

Reflection:

- How do I show respect to all human beings?
- Do I witness an acknowledgment of the dignity of friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, retail workers, car drivers and public transport users?
- How do I respond to people seeking a safe place to live in Australia, especially when others have so severely abused their human rights?

Human Rights and Climate Change

It is clear that climate change has an impact on human rights. Climate change “poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world” (the United Nations Human Rights Council).

A few years ago some communities in low-lying islands in the Pacific, including Kiribati, asked communities in high green-house gas producing countries to acknowledge the effect of climate change on them and respond appropriately as individuals and governments.

Reflection:

- What has been my response to this urgent call by our island neighbours in the last few years?
- Have I urged the Australian government to respond and to make significant cuts to greenhouse emissions?
- Have I told the government that I want a migration plan developed for the future to assist the environmentally displaced people (climate refugees) from the Pacific and Torres Strait islands?

Homelessness is a Human Rights Issue

Addressing homelessness requires an approach that takes into account its many and varied causes and effects. At all times the dignity of homeless people must be respected and they should be invited to engage in ways to address the issue.

At the Come In Centre, Paddington, the majority of their 319 clients supported by the Centre fall within the age ranges of 15-17 through to 21-23. Key elements of the services provision include casework assistance, general therapeutic support, the satisfying of basic needs, the opportunity to take part in activities, and counselling.

Reflection:

- There are many services working to address this issue, including St Francis Social Services. How could you support the Come In Centre in their work?

The Declaration belongs to each and every one of us –
read it, teach it, promote it and *claim it* as your own.

In the midst of hunger we celebrate the promise of plenty.
In the midst of war we celebrate the promise of peace.
In the midst of oppression we celebrate the promise of freedom.
In the midst of despair we celebrate the promise of hope.
In the midst of fear we celebrate the promise of love.
In the midst of death we celebrate the promise of life.

Sources: <http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/index.shtml>
http://www.mercy.org.au/newscentre/list_editions.cfm?loadref=42