

## Report of Activities 2000-2001

This report covers the period from 26 May 2000 to 31 December 2001.

### 1. Director

In May 2000, the then Director of The Australian Human Rights Centre (AHRC) resigned suddenly. Dr John Pace, formerly Secretary of the UN Commission on Human Rights, was appointed to the position.

### 2. Management Committee

The AHRC is managed by a Management Committee. In 2001 the members of the Management Committee were:

Dr John Pace (Law, Director), A/Prof Peter Kriesler (Economics, Deputy Director), Dr Sarah Pritchard (Law, Deputy Director), Ms Anne McNaughton (Law, ANU), Dr Alan Morris (Social Policy), Dr Barry Dyster (Economic History), Prof Julian Disney (Law), Dr Annie Cossins (Law), Mr John Squires (New College), Ms Siobhan McCann (Gilbert & McCann), Mr Brett O'Halloran (Law), Ms Jackie Keegan (coordinator), Prof Paul Redmond (Law).

The Management Committee held 14 meetings during the period covered by this report (seven in 2000 and seven in 2001). As a matter of urgency, the Committee decided to undertake a review the structure and activities of the AHRC and make whatever changes were necessary to ensure that it was consistent with its aims and conformed to the guidelines for centres at UNSW.

### 3. AHRC Restructure

The Committee dedicated the first phase of its work to strengthening the internal structures of the AHRC and reviewing its activities. It was especially concerned to ensure that its publications program was established on firm foundations. The publishing program at that time consisted of the *Australian Human Rights Journal*, the *Human Rights Defender* and the two books still awaiting completion: *Children on the Agenda* and *Prisoners as Citizens*.

Consistent with this, the Committee reviewed the mission of the AHRC. It affirmed that its approach to human rights should be based on an integrated vision of all human rights, which embraced civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights as set out in the International Bill of Human Rights, and which were inter-related and inter-dependent.

The Committee agreed to merge the Australian Human Rights Information Centre (AHRIC) with the Australian Human Rights Centre (AHRC) and to retain the name of Australian Human Rights Centre for the merged bodies. The Committee agreed to reconstitute the present Advisory Committee as the Advisory Committee for the newly merged body (AHRC). As part of this process, it undertook to review the membership of the Advisory Committee.

The Committee considered it necessary to focus the second phase of the period covered by this report on a review of its Constitution, and drawing up a Program of Work that reflected a pro-active approach to the implementation of its aims. This review was to include a re-assessment of the Documentation Centre and research activities of the AHRC.

The Committee discussed its constitution at length. It agreed to adopt a draft constitution which subsumes the work of the former Australian Human Rights Centre and Australian Human Rights Information Centre. The draft constitution is attached as Annex A to the present report.

The Committee reassessed its activities and adopted a Program of Activity for the following two sessions of the University calendar.

As a result of these developments the following restructuring took place:

#### (a) Publications.

The members of the Committee shared responsibilities among themselves for the various tasks and projects required by the publishing program.

- A Publications Committee was established to oversee and coordinate the publishing program and resolve the difficulties with the publishers.
- The relationship with Prospect Media, the publishers of AHRC publications, was resolved when Prospect Media ceased to exist in mid 2001 as a result of a merger with Lexus/Nexus Butterworths. AHRC signed an agreement with Lexus/Nexus Butterworths to continue publishing the *Australian Human Rights Journal* and AHRC books.
- A panel of student and academic editors was established to edit the *Journal* which, it was resolved, should continue to be published twice a year.
- A student Intern was appointed to work on the *Journal*.
- An Acting Managing Editor of the *Human Rights Defender* was appointed to re-establish the *Defender* and make it viable. A publishing program of three issues a year was agreed upon.
- Editors were appointed to complete the editing and publication of the two unfinished AHRC books.
- As a result of this restructuring, the publication program of the AHRC was maintained throughout the period covered by this report, when 4 issues were published.

#### (b) Research and Teaching

The teaching and research program of the AHRC was also reviewed. As a result:

- In 2001 the necessary infrastructure was put in place for the Centre to participate in the internship program run by the Faculty of Law under the auspices of the Social Justice Project.
- Plans were made for the Centre to supervise one Intern in Session 1, 2002 and two Interns in Session 2, 2002. This is in addition to the Journal Intern whose work is supervised by the Publications Committee.
- Arrangements were made for the Centre Director to conduct a course on Human Rights Law in Session 1, 2002.

- A realistic program was established for 2002.

(c) The volunteer program

The volunteer program of the AHRC has always been an important part of its activity and essential in maintaining its program of activities, especially its publications. In order to develop this, the Management Committee

- Asked the Director to formalize the volunteer program by assigning volunteers to a particular activity ensuring that it had Centre supervision.
- Agreed that the Centre Co-ordinator would expand her role to include some volunteer supervision.
- AHRC has launched an initiative for the establishment of an inter-disciplinary Chair for Human Rights at the University.

(d) Documentation Centre

In line with its stated intention, the Committee decided to undertake the task of rehabilitating the AHRC's Documentation facility in the Law Library.

(e) Finances

The Management Committee asked the Faculty Administrator to review the finances of the Centre and ensure that its accounts were in order.

A Centre Co-ordinator was appointed with primary responsibility for developing a structure for receiving subscriptions for the *Human Rights Defender*. She is employed flexibly for one afternoon per week.

#### 4. Centre Activities 2001

(a) Publications

- *The Australian Journal of Human Rights*. Four issues of the *Journal* were published during the period covered by this report (two in 2000 and two in 2001). One issue each year was a general one and one with a special theme. The special edition in 2001 was on the Mandatory Sentencing Symposium. The *Journal* is edited by a team of student and academic editors. It is a refereed journal and effective systems are in place to ensure its smooth production. These systems are managed by the Journal Intern in co-operation with the Centre Co-ordinator.
- The *Human Rights Defender*. The *Defender* was the subject of a review as to its scope, purpose and readership. After canvassing the readership, a database was re-constructed that now provides a realistic and accurate list of subscribers indicating the status of their subscription. The Committee, after a trial period during which two issues of the *Defender* were published in the second half of 2000, decided to continue publishing the *Defender* as a useful, albeit non-academic, publication of the Centre. Three issues of the *Defender* were published in 2000 and 2001. It is produced with the help of a Managing Editor (academic), a Student Managing Editor, a volunteer layout/design assistant and a panel of (student) editors.
- *Books*. During the period covered by this report, the Committee attended to the completion of two books that were outstanding from previous years. Editing of the first of these books, *Children on the Agenda*, was completed and published in 2001. Work on the second book, *Prisoners as Citizens*, began in 2001. It is being produced in association with HREOC and is expected to be published in the first half of 2002.
- Following the University Symposium on Mandatory Sentencing, which took place on 29 October 2000, AHRC was entrusted with the publication of the proceedings. These were published in a dedicated number of the *Australian Journal of Human Rights* in December 2001.

(b) Web Page

In addition to re-assessing its publications program, the Committee, with the support of AustLII, set up a Home Page within the University's Website in 2001. This is a further means of disseminating the Centre's research and publications.

(c) Documentation Centre

Work on rehabilitating the Documentation Center included cleaning up and up-grading the collection of human rights documentation and the installation of the first two of four dedicated work stations to enable the transition to a wider, more accessible virtual collection of United Nations Human Rights documentation as well as documentation from other sources. In this manner, the Centre plans to provide a facility for specialised or advanced human rights study and research, consistent with its work program. The work has been carried out by student volunteers, the Centre's Interns and other volunteers who have spent many hours sorting and cataloguing the material which has been donated to the Centre. It is anticipated that this work should be completed by the end of 2002. However, it is already operating as a resource for students on campus and other human rights researchers.

(d) Other Human Rights Bodies

The Centre has established contact with other institutions in the region including the Osaka Human Rights Centre and the network of human rights centers in the Asia-Pacific region it is setting up.

It has received delegations from visiting human rights institutions from China (China Society for Human Rights Studies) and Indonesia (Komnas Ham).

(e) Research

The Centre sent a brief written submission to the Senate Mandatory Sentencing Enquiry and was represented at the oral hearings by Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim.

Through the Director and the Co-ordinator, the Centre was involved with the Centre for Refugee Research in the development and organization for the international Conference on Refugee Law and the 1951 Convention: "The 1951 Convention Relating to Refugees; Where to from here?", held at UNSW in December 2001.

AHRC initiated a move to establish an inter-disciplinary Chair of Human Rights at UNSW. A committee was established and preliminary investigations into the viability and funding of the Chair were made.

### Charter of the AHRC

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that:-

Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Australia's National Action Plan, adopted in response to the recommendations of the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, identified the need for an effective and efficient means of informing Australian citizens about international human rights obligations and complaint mechanisms.

The Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee's 1995 Report, *Trick or Treaty? Commonwealth Power to Make and Implement Treaties*, expressed concern that the Australian public does not have access to adequate information about the United Nations and the role of Treaties.

In 1995, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the years 1995-2004 as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

In 1995, the Australian Human Rights Centre at the University of New South Wales decided to establish The Australian Human Rights Information Centre. In 2001, Australian Human Rights Centre and the Human Rights Centre were merged into one institution, the **Australian Human Rights Centre** and adopted the Charter set out hereunder.

## **Objectives**

The Australian Human Rights (AHRC) will seek to increase public awareness about human rights procedures, standards and issues within the Asia-Pacific region.

AHRC will provide accessible information on human rights to the general public and, in particular, to NGOs, government departments, human rights advocates, community legal centres, journalists, educators, researchers and students.

AHRC will maintain a comprehensive collection of human rights documentation, provide an on-line data base service, undertake research and prepare publications, organize human rights educational activities and, within available resources respond to requests for technical advice in the area of human rights.

## **Documentation Centre**

The documentation centre is located on level 8, R833, in the Law Library of the University of New South Wales.

The documentation centre will be accessible to the public during library opening hours.

The documentation centre's holdings will include primary United Nations, regional and Australian documentation, as well as relevant secondary materials. In developing its collection, AHRC will focus on the acquisition of United Nations and Australian material. In the medium term, AHRC also plans to acquire documentation relating to human rights issues in the Asia-Pacific region and initiatives towards the establishment of regional arrangements for the protection and promotion of human rights. AHRC will also acquire documentation of other regional human rights mechanisms.

## **Database & Internet**

The database, combined with a homepage on the internet, will provide remote access to human rights information.

The homepage will initially facilitate access to primary United Nations and Australian material and links to other databases. AHRC plans to develop the database to provide access to information concerning legislative, judicial and administrative human rights developments in Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

AHRC also plans to develop a network to enable human rights organisations and educators in the Asia-Pacific region to maintain electronic bulletin boards and conferences, send out network alerts, collaborate on human rights projects and advocacy issues, maintain events, calendars and put out other relevant information.

The Australian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) will collaborate with AHRC in developing and maintaining the AHRIC database and homepage.

## **Research and Publications**

AHRC will prepare accessible publications on domestic human rights and equal opportunity machinery and on international human rights complaint procedures. In the preparation of such publications AHRC will consult with particular client groups and advocacy organisation, and where appropriate, supervise their translation into regional languages.

AHRC will also initiate and assist research into specific human rights issues.

## **Education and Technical Assistance**

AHRC will develop a programme of human rights educational activities including courses, conferences and seminars on the UN Human Rights system and on particular human rights issues.

In developing educational activities, AHRC will consult with relevant client groups such as women, indigenous peoples, people of non-English speaking background, older people, children and youth, gays and lesbians, and with relevant advocacy organisations.

Within available resources, AHRC will respond to requests for technical assistance and advisory services.

## **Management and Administrative Structure**

The Australian Human Rights Centre (AHRC) is formed at the Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales. AHRC will appoint a Director to undertake forward-planning and policy development, to promote the objectives of the Centre and to assume responsibility for day-to-day administration of AHRC and supervision of volunteers.

The Australian Human Rights Centre will be managed by a Management Committee comprising academics and other interested persons from UNSW and other universities and other interested persons as deemed suitable.

AHRIC will have an Advisory Council consisting of representatives of the Human Rights Centre, Faculties of Arts, Commerce and Law, Law Library, AustLII, human rights organisation and experts. The Advisory Council will provide broad policy input into the operation of AHRIC, advocacy and representation of AHRIC and expert advice in particular areas. (NB The newly constituted AHRC subsumed the AHRIC Advisory Council.)