



Australian Capital Territory

# Human Rights Act 2004

**A2004-5**

**Republication No 17**

**Effective: 17 March 2025**

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Last amendment made by [A2024-49](#)  
(republication for amendments by [A2024-43](#))

## About this republication

### The republished law

This is a republication of the *Human Rights Act 2004* (including any amendment made under the [Legislation Act 2001](#), part 11.3 (Editorial changes)) as in force on 17 March 2025. It also includes any commencement, amendment, repeal or expiry affecting this republished law to 17 March 2025.

The legislation history and amendment history of the republished law are set out in endnotes 3 and 4.

### Kinds of republications

The Parliamentary Counsel's Office prepares 2 kinds of republications of ACT laws (see the ACT legislation register at [www.legislation.act.gov.au](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au)):

- authorised republications to which the [Legislation Act 2001](#) applies
- unauthorised republications.

The status of this republication appears on the bottom of each page.

### Editorial changes

The [Legislation Act 2001](#), part 11.3 authorises the Parliamentary Counsel to make editorial amendments and other changes of a formal nature when preparing a law for republication. Editorial changes do not change the effect of the law, but have effect as if they had been made by an Act commencing on the republication date (see [Legislation Act 2001](#), s 115 and s 117). The changes are made if the Parliamentary Counsel considers they are desirable to bring the law into line, or more closely into line, with current legislative drafting practice.

This republication includes amendments made under part 11.3 (see endnote 1).

### Uncommenced provisions and amendments

If a provision of the republished law has not commenced, the symbol **U** appears immediately before the provision heading. Any uncommenced amendments that affect this republished law are accessible on the ACT legislation register ([www.legislation.act.gov.au](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au)). For more information, see the home page for this law on the register.

### Modifications

If a provision of the republished law is affected by a current modification, the symbol **M** appears immediately before the provision heading. The text of the modifying provision appears in the endnotes. For the legal status of modifications, see the [Legislation Act 2001](#), section 95.

### Penalties

At the republication date, the value of a penalty unit for an offence against this law is \$160 for an individual and \$810 for a corporation (see [Legislation Act 2001](#), s 133).



Australian Capital Territory

# Human Rights Act 2004

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Australian Capital Territory

# Human Rights Act 2004

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An Act to respect, protect and promote human rights

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## **Preamble**

- 1 Human rights are necessary for individuals to live lives of dignity and value.
- 2 Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of individuals improves the welfare of the whole community.
- 3 Human rights are set out in this Act so that individuals know what their rights are.
- 4 Setting out these human rights also makes it easier for them to be taken into consideration in the development and interpretation of legislation.
- 5 This Act encourages individuals to see themselves, and each other, as the holders of rights, and as responsible for upholding the human rights of others.
- 6 Few rights are absolute. Human rights may be subject only to the reasonable limits in law that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. One individual's rights may also need to be weighed against another individual's rights.
- 7 Although human rights belong to all individuals, they have special significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—the first owners of this land, members of its most enduring cultures, and individuals for whom the issue of rights protection has great and continuing importance.

The Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory therefore enacts as follows:



## Part 1 Preliminary

### 1 Name of Act

This Act is the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

### 3 Dictionary

The dictionary at the end of this Act is part of this Act.

*Note 1* The dictionary at the end of this Act defines certain terms used in this Act, and includes references (*signpost definitions*) to other terms defined elsewhere.

For example, the signpost definition ‘*human rights*—see section 5.’ means that the term ‘human rights’ is defined in that section.

*Note 2* A definition in the dictionary (including a signpost definition) applies to the entire Act unless the definition, or another provision of the Act, provides otherwise or the contrary intention otherwise appears (see [Legislation Act](#), s 155 and s 156 (1)).

### 4 Notes

A note included in this Act is explanatory and is not part of this Act.

*Note* See [Legislation Act](#), s 127 (1), (4) and (5) for the legal status of notes.

## Part 2 Human rights

### 5 What are *human rights*?

In this Act:

*human rights* means—

- (a) the civil and political rights in part 3; and
- (b) the economic, social and cultural rights in part 3A.

### 6 Who has human rights?

Only individuals have human rights.

### 7 Rights apart from Act

This Act is not exhaustive of the rights an individual may have under domestic or international law.

#### Examples of other rights

- 1 rights under the *Discrimination Act 1991* or another Territory law
- 2 rights under the ICCPR not listed in this Act
- 3 rights under the ICESCR not listed in this Act
- 4 rights under other international conventions

## Part 3 Civil and political rights

*Note* The primary source of these rights is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### 8 Recognition and equality before the law

- (1) Everyone has the right to recognition as a person before the law.
- (2) Everyone has the right to enjoy their human rights without distinction or discrimination of any kind.
- (3) Everyone is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination. In particular, everyone has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground.

#### **Examples of discrimination**

Discrimination because of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

### 9 Right to life

- (1) Everyone has the right to life. In particular, no-one may be arbitrarily deprived of life.
- (2) This section applies to a person from the time of birth.

### 10 Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment etc

- (1) No-one may be—
  - (a) tortured; or
  - (b) treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.
- (2) No-one may be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation or treatment without their free consent.

## **11 Protection of the family and children**

*Note* Family has a broad meaning (see ICCPR General Comment 19 (39th session, 1990)).

- (1) The family is the natural and basic group unit of society and is entitled to be protected by society.
- (2) Every child has the right to the protection needed by the child because of being a child, without distinction or discrimination of any kind.

### **Examples of distinction or discrimination**

Distinction or discrimination because of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

*Note* A child also has the other human rights set out in this Act.

## **12 Privacy and reputation**

Everyone has the right—

- (a) not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence interfered with unlawfully or arbitrarily; and
- (b) not to have their reputation unlawfully attacked.

## **13 Freedom of movement**

Everyone has the right to move freely within the ACT and to enter and leave it, and the freedom to choose their residence in the ACT.

## **14 Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief**

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes—
  - (a) the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice; and
  - (b) the freedom to demonstrate their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching, either individually or as part of a community and whether in public or private.

- (2) No-one may be coerced in a way that would limit their freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.

## **15 Peaceful assembly and freedom of association**

- (1) Everyone has the right of peaceful assembly.
- (2) Everyone has the right to freedom of association.

## **16 Freedom of expression**

- (1) Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
- (2) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of borders, whether orally, in writing or in print, by way of art, or in another way chosen by them.

## **17 Taking part in public life**

Every citizen has the right, and is to have the opportunity, to—

- (a) take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; and
- (b) vote and be elected at periodic elections, that guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors; and
- (c) have access, on general terms of equality, for appointment to the public service and public office.

## **18 Right to liberty and security of person**

- (1) Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. In particular, no-one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.
- (2) No-one may be deprived of liberty, except on the grounds and in accordance with the procedures established by law.

- (3) Anyone who is arrested must be told, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for the arrest and must be promptly told about any charges against them.
- (4) Anyone who is arrested or detained on a criminal charge—
  - (a) must be promptly brought before a judge or magistrate; and
  - (b) has the right to be tried within a reasonable time or released.
- (5) Anyone who is awaiting trial must not be detained in custody as a general rule, but their release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceeding, and, if appropriate, for execution of judgment.
- (6) Anyone who is deprived of liberty by arrest or detention is entitled to apply to a court so that the court can decide, without delay, the lawfulness of the detention and order the person's release if the detention is not lawful.
- (7) Anyone who has been unlawfully arrested or detained has the right to compensation for the arrest or detention.
- (8) No-one may be imprisoned only because of the inability to carry out a contractual obligation.

## **19 Humane treatment when deprived of liberty**

- (1) Anyone deprived of liberty must be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.
- (2) An accused person must be segregated from convicted people, except in exceptional circumstances.

*Note* An accused child must also be segregated from accused adults (see s 20 (1))
- (3) An accused person must be treated in a way that is appropriate for a person who has not been convicted.

**20 Children in the criminal process**

- (1) An accused child must be segregated from accused adults.
- (2) An accused child must be treated in a way that is appropriate for a person of the child's age who has not been convicted.
- (3) A child must be brought to trial as quickly as possible.
- (4) A convicted child must be treated in a way that is appropriate for a person of the child's age who has been convicted.

**21 Fair trial**

- (1) Everyone has the right to have criminal charges, and rights and obligations recognised by law, decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing.
- (2) However, the press and public may be excluded from all or part of a trial—
  - (a) to protect morals, public order or national security in a democratic society; or
  - (b) if the interest of the private lives of the parties require the exclusion; or
  - (c) if, and to the extent that, the exclusion is strictly necessary, in special circumstances of the case, because publicity would otherwise prejudice the interests of justice.
- (3) But each judgment in a criminal or civil proceeding must be made public unless the interest of a child requires that the judgment not be made public.

**22 Rights in criminal proceedings**

- (1) Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

- (2) Anyone charged with a criminal offence is entitled to the following minimum guarantees, equally with everyone else:
- (a) to be told promptly and in detail, in a language that they understand, about the nature and reason for the charge;
  - (b) to have adequate time and facilities to prepare their defence and to communicate with lawyers or advisors chosen by them;
  - (c) to be tried without delay;
  - (d) to be tried in person, and to defend themselves personally, or through legal assistance chosen by them;
  - (e) to be told, if they do not have legal assistance, about the right to legal assistance chosen by them;
  - (f) to have legal assistance provided to them, if the interests of justice require that the assistance be provided, and to have the legal assistance provided without payment if they cannot afford to pay for the assistance;
  - (g) to examine prosecution witnesses, or have them examined, and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on their behalf under the same conditions as prosecution witnesses;
  - (h) to have the free assistance of an interpreter if they cannot understand or speak the language used in court;
  - (i) not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt.
- (3) A child who is charged with a criminal offence has the right to a procedure that takes account of the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's rehabilitation.
- (4) Anyone convicted of a criminal offence has the right to have the conviction and sentence reviewed by a higher court in accordance with law.



**23 Compensation for wrongful conviction**

- (1) This section applies if—
  - (a) anyone is convicted by a final decision of a criminal offence; and
  - (b) the person suffers punishment because of the conviction; and
  - (c) the conviction is reversed, or they are pardoned, on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice.
- (2) If this section applies, the person has the right to be compensated according to law.
- (3) However, subsection (2) does not apply if it is proved that the nondisclosure of the unknown fact in time is completely or partly the person's own doing.

**24 Right not to be tried or punished more than once**

No-one may be tried or punished again for an offence for which they have already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with law.

**25 Retrospective criminal laws**

- (1) No-one may be held guilty of a criminal offence because of conduct that was not a criminal offence under Territory law when it was engaged in.
- (2) A penalty may not be imposed on anyone for a criminal offence that is heavier than the penalty that applied to the offence when it was committed. If the penalty for an offence is reduced after anyone commits the offence, they benefit from the reduced penalty.

**26 Freedom from forced work**

- (1) No-one may be held in slavery or servitude.
- (2) No-one may be made to perform forced or compulsory labour.
- (3) In subsection (2):

*forced or compulsory labour* does not include—

- (a) work or service normally required of an individual who is under detention because of a lawful court order, or who has been conditionally released from detention under a court order; or
- (b) work or service required because of an emergency or calamity threatening the life or wellbeing of the community; or
- (c) work or service that forms part of normal civil obligations.

**27 Cultural and other rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other minorities**

- (1) Anyone who belongs to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority must not be denied the right, with other members of the minority, to enjoy their culture, to declare and practise their religion, or to use their language.
- (2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right—
  - (a) to maintain, control, protect and develop their—
    - (i) cultural heritage and distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs and teachings; and
    - (ii) languages and knowledge; and
    - (iii) kinship ties; and

- (b) to have their material and economic relationships with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs recognised and valued.

*Note* The primary source of the rights in s (2) is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, art 25 and art 31.

## Part 3A Economic, social and cultural rights

*Note 1* The primary sources of these rights are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations General Assembly, *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, A/RES/76/300 (28 July 2022).

*Note 2* Some aspects of economic, social and cultural rights are considered at international law to be subject to an obligation of progressive realisation.

*Note 3* An international law relevant to interpreting progressively realisable rights is Article 8 (4) of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That article provides for consideration of the reasonableness of steps taken to progressively realise rights and notes that a range of possible policy measures for the implementation of rights may be adopted.

### 27A Right to education

- (1) Every child has the right to have access to free, school education appropriate to their needs.
- (2) Everyone has the right to have access to further education and vocational and continuing training.
- (3) These rights are limited to the following immediately realisable aspects:
  - (a) everyone is entitled to enjoy these rights without discrimination;
  - (b) to ensure the religious and moral education of a child in conformity with the convictions of the child's parent or guardian, the parent or guardian may choose schooling for the child (other than schooling provided by the government) that conforms to the minimum educational standards required under law.

**27B Right to work and other work-related rights**

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, including the right to choose their occupation or profession freely. The practice of a trade, occupation or profession may be regulated by law.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work.
- (3) Everyone has the right to form or join a work-related organisation, including a trade union, with the objective of promoting or protecting their economic or other social interests.
- (4) Everyone has the right to protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in relation to their employment.
- (5) Everyone is entitled to enjoy these rights without discrimination.

**Examples—discrimination**

discrimination because of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status

*Note* Section 28 sets out what must be considered in deciding whether a limit on rights is reasonable.

**27C Right to a healthy environment**

- (1) Everyone has the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- (2) Everyone is entitled to enjoy this right without discrimination.

*Note 1* Section 28 sets out what must be considered in deciding whether a limit on rights is reasonable.

*Note 2* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights in relation to the land and waters and other resources (see s 27 (2) (b)).

## **Part 3B Limits on human rights**

### **28 Human rights may be limited**

- (1) Human rights may be subject only to reasonable limits set by laws that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.
- (2) In deciding whether a limit is reasonable, all relevant factors must be considered, including the following:
  - (a) the nature of the right affected;
  - (b) the importance of the purpose of the limitation;
  - (c) the nature and extent of the limitation;
  - (d) the relationship between the limitation and its purpose;
  - (e) any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose the limitation seeks to achieve.

## **Part 4                      Application of human rights to Territory laws**

### **29                      Application of pt 4**

This part applies to all Territory laws.

### **30                      Interpretation of laws and human rights**

So far as it is possible to do so consistently with its purpose, a Territory law must be interpreted in a way that is compatible with human rights.

### **31                      Interpretation of human rights**

- (1) International law, and the judgments of foreign and international courts and tribunals, relevant to a human right may be considered in interpreting the human right.
- (2) In deciding whether material mentioned in subsection (1) or any other material should be considered, and the weight to be given to the material, the following matters must be taken into account:
  - (a) the desirability of being able to rely on the ordinary meaning of this Act, having regard to its purpose and its provisions read in the context of the Act as a whole;
  - (b) the undesirability of prolonging proceedings without compensating advantage;
  - (c) the accessibility of the material to the public.

*Note*        The matters to be taken into account under this subsection are consistent with those required to be taken into account under the [Legislation Act](#), s 141 (2).

- (3) For subsection (2) (c), material in the ACT legislation register is taken to be accessible to the public.

**32 Declaration of incompatibility**

- (1) This section applies if—
  - (a) a proceeding is being heard by the Supreme Court; and
  - (b) an issue arises in the proceeding about whether a Territory law is consistent with a human right.
- (2) If the Supreme Court is satisfied that the territory law is not consistent with the human right, the court may declare that the law is not consistent with the human right (the *declaration of incompatibility*).
- (3) The declaration of incompatibility does not affect—
  - (a) the validity, operation or enforcement of the law; or
  - (b) the rights or obligations of anyone.
- (4) The registrar of the Supreme Court must promptly give a copy of the declaration of incompatibility to the Attorney-General.

**33 Attorney-General's action on receiving declaration of incompatibility**

- (1) This section applies if the Attorney-General receives a copy of a declaration of incompatibility.
- (2) The Attorney-General must present a copy of the declaration of incompatibility to the Legislative Assembly within 6 sitting days after the day the Attorney-General receives the copy.
- (3) The Attorney-General must prepare a written response to the declaration of incompatibility and present it to the Legislative Assembly not later than 6 months after the day the copy of the declaration is presented to the Legislative Assembly.



**34 Notice to Attorney-General and commission**

- (1) This section applies if—
  - (a) a question arises in a proceeding in the Supreme Court that involves the application of this Act; or
  - (b) the Supreme Court is considering making a declaration of incompatibility in a proceeding.
- (2) The Supreme Court must not allow the proceeding to continue or make the declaration unless the court is satisfied that—
  - (a) notice of the proceeding has been given to—
    - (i) the commission; and
    - (ii) if the Territory is not a party to the proceeding—the Attorney-General; and
  - (b) a reasonable period of time has passed since the giving of the notice for the commission and, if required, the Attorney-General to decide whether to intervene in the proceeding.
- (3) For subsection (2), the Supreme Court may—
  - (a) direct a party to give notice of the proceeding to the commission and, if required, the Attorney-General; and
  - (b) continue to hear evidence and argument concerning matters severable from any matter involving the application of this Act.
- (4) Subsection (2) does not prevent the Supreme Court from hearing and deciding a proceeding, to the extent that the proceeding relates to the grant of urgent relief of an interlocutory nature, if the court considers it necessary in the interests of justice.

**35 Attorney-General's right to intervene on human rights**

The Attorney-General may intervene in a proceeding before a court that involves the application of this Act.

**36                      Human rights commissioner may intervene**

- (1) The human rights commissioner may intervene in a proceeding before a court that involves the application of this Act with the leave of the court.
- (2) The court may give leave subject to conditions.

## Part 5                      Scrutiny of proposed Territory laws

### 37                      Attorney-General's statement on government bills

- (1) This section applies to each bill presented to the Legislative Assembly by a Minister.
- (2) The Attorney-General must prepare a written statement (the *compatibility statement*) about the bill for presentation to the Legislative Assembly.
- (3) The compatibility statement must state—
  - (a) whether, in the Attorney-General's opinion, the bill is consistent with human rights; and
  - (b) if it is not consistent, how it is not consistent with human rights.

### 38                      Consideration of legislation by relevant Assembly committee

- (1) The relevant Assembly committee must report to the Legislative Assembly about human rights issues raised by bills and subordinate laws presented to the Assembly.
- (2) In this section:  
*relevant Assembly committee* means a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly nominated, in writing, by the Speaker for subsection (1).

### 39                      Noncompliance with s 37 and s 38

A failure to comply with section 37 or section 38 in relation to a bill does not affect the validity, operation or enforcement of any Territory law.

## Part 5A Obligations of public authorities

### 40 Meaning of *public authority*

(1) Each of the following is a *public authority*:

- (a) an administrative unit;
- (b) a territory authority;
- (c) a territory instrumentality;
- (d) a Minister;
- (e) a police officer, when exercising a function under a Territory law;
- (f) a public employee;
- (g) an entity whose functions are or include functions of a public nature, when it is exercising those functions for the Territory or a public authority (whether under contract or otherwise).

*Note* A reference to an entity includes a reference to a person exercising a function of the entity, whether under a delegation, subdelegation or otherwise (see [Legislation Act](#), s 184A (1)).

(2) However, *public authority* does not include—

- (a) the Legislative Assembly, except when acting in an administrative capacity; or
- (b) a court, except when acting in an administrative capacity.

**40A      Meaning of *function of a public nature***

- (1) In deciding whether a function of an entity is a *function of a public nature*, the following matters may be considered:
  - (a) whether the function is conferred on the entity under a territory law;
  - (b) whether the function is connected to or generally identified with functions of government;
  - (c) whether the function is of a regulatory nature;
  - (d) whether the entity is publicly funded to perform the function;
  - (e) whether the entity performing the function is a company (within the meaning of the Corporations Act) the majority of the shares in which are held by or for the Territory.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not limit the matters that may be considered in deciding whether a function is of a public nature.
- (3) Without limiting subsection (1) or (2), the following functions are taken to be of a public nature:
  - (a) the operation of detention places and correctional centres;
  - (b) the provision of any of the following services:
    - (i) gas, electricity and water supply;
    - (ii) emergency services;
    - (iii) public health services;
    - (iv) public education;
    - (v) public transport;
    - (vi) public housing.

## **40B Public authorities must act consistently with human rights**

- (1) It is unlawful for a public authority—
- (a) to act in a way that is incompatible with a human right; or
  - (b) in making a decision, to fail to give proper consideration to a relevant human right.

*Note* A person who is or would be aggrieved by an act by a public authority, other than a public authority mentioned in section 40 (1) (e), they believe to be in contravention of this section may make a human rights complaint about the public authority to the commission under the [Human Rights Commission Act 2005](#), section 41D.

- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply if the act is done or decision made under a law in force in the Territory and—
- (a) the law expressly requires the act to be done or decision made in a particular way and that way is inconsistent with a human right; or
  - (b) the law cannot be interpreted in a way that is consistent with a human right.

*Note* A law in force in the Territory includes a Territory law and a Commonwealth law.

- (3) In this section:
- public authority*** includes an entity for whom a declaration is in force under section 40D.

## **40C Legal proceedings in relation to public authority actions**

- (1) This section applies if a person—
- (a) claims that a public authority has acted in contravention of section 40B; and
  - (b) alleges that the person is or would be a victim of the contravention.

- (2) The person may—
  - (a) start a proceeding in the Supreme Court against the public authority; or
  - (b) rely on the person's rights under this Act in other legal proceedings.
- (3) A proceeding under subsection (2) (a) must be started not later than 1 year after the day (or last day) the act complained of happens, unless the court orders otherwise.
- (4) Without limiting subsection (3), the court may order that a proceeding under subsection (2) (a) be started after the period stated in subsection (3) if—
  - (a) the person making the claim has made a human rights complaint to the commission under the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005*, section 41D about the act within the period stated in subsection (3); and
  - (b) it is unreasonable in the circumstances for the period to apply to the proceeding.
- (5) The respondent to a proceeding started under subsection (2) (a) is—
  - (a) if the public authority is a public authority mentioned in section 40 (1) (a) to (e) or (g)—the public authority; or
  - (b) if the public authority is a public employee who is a statutory office-holder—the statutory office-holder; or
  - (c) if the public authority is any other public employee—the Territory; or
  - (d) if the public authority is an entity for whom a declaration is in force under section 40D—the entity.
- (6) The Supreme Court may, in a proceeding under subsection (2), grant the relief it considers appropriate except damages.

- (7) This section does not affect—
- (a) a right a person has (otherwise than because of this Act) to seek relief in relation to an act or decision of a public authority; or
  - (b) a right a person has to damages (apart from this section).

*Note* See also s 18 (7) and s 23.

- (8) This section does not apply to a claim that a public authority has acted in contravention of section 40B if the contravention claimed is—
- (a) that the public authority acted in a way that is incompatible with the human right set out in section 27C (Right to a healthy environment); or
  - (b) in making a decision, the public authority failed to give proper consideration to the human right set out in section 27C.
- (9) To remove any doubt, subsection (8) does not prevent a person making a claim in relation to another human right, even if the subject matter of the claim or part of the claim is the same, similar or related to the subject matter of a claim to which subsection (8) applies.

**Example**

A person may claim a public authority acted in a way that is incompatible with the human right set out in s 9 (Right to life) and the subject matter of the claim may include an exposure of the person to an environmental risk to their health that is life threatening.

- (10) Subsections (8), (9) and this subsection expire on 1 October 2028.
- (11) In this section:
- public authority*** includes an entity for whom a declaration is in force under section 40D.



**40D Other entities may choose to be subject to obligations of public authorities**

- (1) An entity that is not a public authority under section 40 may ask the Minister, in writing, to declare that the entity is subject to the obligations of a public authority under this part.
- (2) On request under subsection (1), the Minister must make the declaration.
- (3) The Minister may revoke the declaration only if the entity asks the Minister, in writing, to revoke it.
- (4) A declaration under this section is a notifiable instrument.

*Note* A notifiable instrument must be notified under the [Legislation Act](#).

## Part 6 Miscellaneous

### 41 Review of effect of territory laws on human rights

- (1) The commission has the following functions:
  - (a) review the effect of territory laws, including the common law, on human rights;
  - (b) report in writing to the Minister on the results of the review.
- (2) The Minister must present a copy of a report mentioned in subsection (1) to the Legislative Assembly within 6 sitting days after the day the Minister receives the report.
- (3) However, the Minister may amend the report (including by omitting part of the report) before presenting it to the Legislative Assembly to prevent the report—
  - (a) disclosing the identity of—
    - (i) a person whose human rights have, or may have been, contravened; or
    - (ii) someone who may have contravened someone else's rights; or
  - (b) allowing the identity of someone mentioned in paragraph (a) to be worked out; or
  - (c) disclosing information if the disclosure of the information could, in the Minister's opinion, harm the public interest.
- (4) If the Minister amends the report, the Minister must present a statement to the Legislative Assembly with the report that tells the Assembly that the report has been amended.

**42 Regulation-making power**

The Executive may make regulations for this Act.

*Note* Regulations must be notified, and presented to the Legislative Assembly, under the [Legislation Act](#).

**43 Review of amendments made by Human Rights (Healthy Environment) Amendment Act 2024**

- (1) The Minister must review the operation of the amendments to this Act made by the [Human Rights \(Healthy Environment\) Amendment Act 2024](#).
- (2) In undertaking the review, the Minister must—
  - (a) consider the categorisation of the human right set out in section 27C as an economic, social and cultural right; and
  - (b) evaluate the prohibition under section 40C (8) on a person starting a proceeding or relying on their rights in relation to a claim that a public authority has acted in contravention of section 40B if the contravention claimed is—
    - (i) that the public authority acted in a way that is incompatible with the human right set out in section 27C; or
    - (ii) in making a decision, the public authority failed to give proper consideration to the human right set out in section 27C; and
  - (c) despite section 40C (10)—consider whether the prohibition under section 40C (8) remains appropriate.
- (3) The Minister must—
  - (a) begin the review not later than 1 October 2027; and
  - (b) present a report of the review to the Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable after the report is completed.
- (4) This section expires on 1 October 2028.

(5) In this section:

*public authority*—see section 40C (11).

## Schedule 1 ICCPR source of human rights

(see pt 3)

column 1 item	column 2 section	column 3 description	column 4 ICCPR article
1	8 (1)	right to recognition as person	16
2	8 (2)	right to enjoy rights without distinction etc	2 (1)
3	8 (3)	equality before law and equal protection	26
4	9 (1)	right to life	6 (1)
5	10	protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment etc	7
6	11 (1)	protection of family	23 (1)
7	11 (2)	protection of children	24 (1)
8	12	privacy and reputation	17 (1)
9	13	freedom of movement	12 (1)
10	14 (1)	freedom of thought, conscience and religion	18 (1), (3)
11	14 (2)	no coercion to limit religious freedom	18 (2), (3)
12	15 (1)	peaceful assembly	21
13	15 (2)	freedom of association	22
14	16 (1)	right to hold opinions	19 (1)
15	16 (2)	freedom of expression	19 (2), (3)
16	17	taking part in public life	25
17	18 (1)-(7)	right to liberty and security of person	9
18	18 (8)	no imprisonment for contractual obligations	11

**Schedule 1**

## ICCPR source of human rights

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column 1 item	column 2 section	column 3 description	column 4 ICCPR article
19	19	humane treatment when deprived of liberty	10 (1), (2) (a)
20	20	children in the criminal process	10 (2) (b), (3)
21	21	fair trial	14 (1)
22	22 (1)	rights in criminal proceedings	14 (2)
23	22 (2)	minimum guarantees for those charged	14 (3)
24	22 (3)	rights of child charged	14 (4)
25	22 (4)	right of review	14 (5)
26	23	compensation for wrongful conviction	14 (6)
27	24	right not to be tried or punished more than once	14 (7)
28	25	retrospective criminal laws	15 (1)
29	26	freedom from forced work	8 (1), (2), (3) (a), (3) (c)
30	27 (1)	rights of minorities	27
31	27 (2)	cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	

*Note* The primary source of the rights in s 27 (2) is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, art 25 and art 31.

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## Schedule 2      ICESCR source of human rights

(see pt 3A)

column 1 item	column 2 section	column 3 description	column 4 ICESCR article
1	27A	right to education	13
2	27B	right to work and other work-related rights	2 (2), 6 (1), 7, 8

*Note 1*    The primary source of the right in s 27B (4) is the International Labour Organisation Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, art 1.

*Note 2*    The primary source of the right in s 27C is the United Nations General Assembly, *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, A/RES/76/300 (28 July 2022).

## Dictionary

(see s 3)

*Note 1* The [Legislation Act](#) contains definitions and other provisions relevant to this Act.

*Note 2* For example, the [Legislation Act](#), dict, pt 1, defines the following terms:

- Act (see s 7)
- emergency service
- entity
- foreign country
- individual
- may (see s 146)
- Minister (see s 162)
- proceeding
- public employee
- public service
- statutory instrument (see s 13).

***act***, for part 5A (Obligations of public authorities), includes fail to act and propose to act.

***commission*** means the human rights commission.

***conduct*** includes omission.

***court*** includes the following:

- (a) the ACAT;
- (b) an entity prescribed by regulation.

***declaration of incompatibility***—see section 32.

***engage*** in conduct means—

- (a) do an act; or
- (b) omit to do an act.



***function of a public nature***—see section 40A.

***human rights***—see section 5.

***ICCPR*** means the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

***ICESCR*** means the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

***international law*** includes—

- (a) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other human rights treaties to which Australia is a party; and
- (b) general comments and views of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies; and
- (c) declarations and standards adopted by the United Nations General Assembly that are relevant to human rights.

***public authority***—see section 40.

***Territory law*** means an Act or statutory instrument.

## Endnotes

1 About the endnotes

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## Endnotes

### 1 About the endnotes

Amending and modifying laws are annotated in the legislation history and the amendment history. Current modifications are not included in the republished law but are set out in the endnotes.

Not all editorial amendments made under the [Legislation Act 2001](#), part 11.3 are annotated in the amendment history. Full details of any amendments can be obtained from the Parliamentary Counsel's Office.

Uncommenced amending laws are not included in the republished law. The details of these laws are underlined in the legislation history. Uncommenced expiries are underlined in the legislation history and amendment history.

If all the provisions of the law have been renumbered, a table of renumbered provisions gives details of previous and current numbering.

The endnotes also include a table of earlier republications.

### 2 Abbreviation key

A = Act	NI = Notifiable instrument
AF = Approved form	o = order
am = amended	om = omitted/repealed
amdt = amendment	ord = ordinance
AR = Assembly resolution	orig = original
ch = chapter	par = paragraph/subparagraph
CN = Commencement notice	pres = present
def = definition	prev = previous
DI = Disallowable instrument	(prev...) = previously
dict = dictionary	pt = part
disallowed = disallowed by the Legislative Assembly	r = rule/subrule
div = division	reloc = relocated
exp = expires/expired	renum = renumbered
Gaz = gazette	R[X] = Republication No
hdg = heading	RI = reissue
IA = Interpretation Act 1967	s = section/subsection
ins = inserted/added	sch = schedule
LA = Legislation Act 2001	sdiv = subdivision
LR = legislation register	SL = Subordinate law
LRA = Legislation (Republication) Act 1996	sub = substituted
mod = modified/modification	<u>underlining</u> = whole or part not commenced or to be expired

### 3 Legislation history

#### **Human Rights Act 2004 A2004-5**

notified LR 10 March 2004  
s 1, s 2 commenced 10 March 2004 (LA s 75 (1))  
remainder commenced 1 July 2004 (s 2)

as amended by

#### **Human Rights Commission Legislation Amendment Act 2005**

##### **A2005-41 sch 1 pt 1.7 (as am by A2006-3 amdt 1.3)**

notified LR 1 September 2005  
s 1, s 2 commenced 1 September 2005 (LA s 75 (1))  
sch 1 pt 1.7 commenced 1 November 2006 (s 2 (3) (as am by A2006-3  
amdt 1.3) and see [Human Rights Commission Act 2005](#) A2005-40, s 2  
(as am by A2006-3 s 4) and CN2006-21)

#### **Human Rights Commission Legislation Amendment Act 2006**

##### **A2006-3 amdt 1.3**

notified LR 22 February 2006  
s 1, s 2 commenced 22 February 2006 (LA s 75 (1))  
amdt 1.3 commenced 23 February 2006 (s 2)

*Note* This Act only amends the [Human Rights Commission  
Legislation Amendment Act 2005](#) A2005-41

#### **Human Rights Amendment Act 2008 A2008-3**

notified LR 17 March 2008  
s 1, s 2 commenced 17 March 2008 (LA s 75 (1))  
ss 7-9 commenced 1 January 2009 (s 2 (1))  
remainder commenced 18 March 2008 (s 2 (2))

#### **ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Legislation Amendment**

##### **Act 2008 A2008-36 sch 1 pt 1.30**

notified LR 4 September 2008  
s 1, s 2 commenced 4 September 2008 (LA s 75 (1))  
sch 1 pt 1.30 commenced 2 February 2009 (s 2 (1) and see [ACT Civil  
and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008](#) A2008-35, s 2 (1) and CN2009-2)

#### **Human Rights Amendment Act 2012 A2012-41**

notified LR 29 August 2012  
s 1, s 2 commenced 29 August 2012 (LA s 75 (1))  
remainder commenced 1 January 2013 (s 2)

## Endnotes

3 Legislation history

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### **Human Rights Amendment Act 2016 A2016-5**

notified LR 25 February 2016  
s 1, s 2 commenced 25 February 2016 (LA s 75 (1))  
remainder commenced 26 February 2016 (s 2)

### **Public Sector Management Amendment Act 2016 A2016-52 sch 1 pt 1.36**

notified LR 25 August 2016  
s 1, s 2 commenced 25 August 2016 (LA s 75 (1))  
sch 1 pt 1.36 commenced 1 September 2016 (s 2)

### **Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2017 A2017-5 sch 1 pt 1.4**

notified LR 23 February 2017  
s 1, s 2 commenced 23 February 2017 (LA s 75 (1))  
sch 1 pt 1.4 commenced 2 March 2017 (s 2 (3))

### **Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Act 2020 A2020-13**

notified LR 13 May 2020  
s 1, s 2 commenced 13 May 2020 (LA s 75 (1))  
remainder commenced 14 May 2020 (s 2)

### **Legislation (Legislative Assembly Committees) Amendment Act 2022 A2022-4 sch 1 pt 1.12**

notified LR 30 March 2022  
s 1, s 2 commenced 30 March 2022 (LA s 75 (1))  
sch 1 pt 1.12 commenced 6 April 2022 (s 2)

### **Human Rights (Complaints) Legislation Amendment Act 2023 A2023-53 pt 2, sch 1**

notified LR 11 December 2023  
s 1, s 2 commenced 11 December 2023 (LA s 75 (1))  
ss 4-7, s 9, sch 1 commenced 12 December 2023 (s 2 (1))  
pt 2 remainder commenced 11 June 2024 (s 2 (2) and LA s 79)

### **Human Rights (Healthy Environment) Amendment Act 2024 A2024-43**

notified LR 17 September 2024  
s 1, s 2 commenced 17 September 2024 (LA s 75 (1))  
remainder commenced 17 March 2025 (s 2 and LA s 79)

**Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2024  
A2024-49 pt 8**

notified LR 17 September 2024

s 1, s 2 taken to have commenced 11 June 2024 (LA s 75 (2))

pt 8 taken to have commenced 11 June 2024 (s 2 (1) and see [Human Rights \(Complaints\) Legislation Amendment Act 2023](#) A2023-53, s 2 (2))

## Endnotes

4 Amendment history

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### 4 Amendment history

#### Preamble

preamble am [A2016-5](#) s 4

#### Commencement

s 2 om LA s 89 (4)

#### What are *human rights*?

s 5 sub [A2012-41](#) s 4

#### Rights apart from Act

s 7 ins [A2012-41](#) s 5

#### Recognition and equality before the law

s 8 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.1

#### Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment etc

s 10 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.1

#### Protection of the family and children

s 11 am [A2016-5](#) s 5

#### Privacy and reputation

s 12 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.1

#### Freedom of movement

s 13 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.1

#### Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief

s 14 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.1

#### Freedom of expression

s 16 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.2

#### Right to liberty and security of person

s 18 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.2, amdt 1.3

#### Rights in criminal proceedings

s 22 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.4

#### Compensation for wrongful conviction

s 23 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.5

#### Right not to be tried or punished more than once

s 24 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.6

#### Retrospective criminal laws

s 25 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.7

#### Cultural and other rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other minorities

s 27 hdg sub [A2016-5](#) s 6

s 27 am [A2016-5](#) s 7; [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.8

**Economic, social and cultural rights**

pt 3A hdg ins [A2012-41](#) s 6  
 pt 3A hdg note sub [A2024-43](#) s 4

**Right to education**

s 27A ins [A2012-41](#) s 6  
 am [A2023-53](#) amdt 1.8

**Right to work and other work-related rights**

s 27B ins [A2020-13](#) s 4  
 am [A2024-43](#) s 5

**Right to a healthy environment**

s 27C ins [A2024-43](#) s 6

**Limits on human rights**

pt 3B hdg ins [A2012-41](#) s 6

**Human rights may be limited**

s 28 am [A2008-3](#) s 4; [A2012-41](#) s 7

**Interpretation of laws and human rights**

s 30 sub [A2008-3](#) s 5

**Notice to Attorney-General and commission**

s 34 hdg sub [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.101  
 s 34 am [A2005-41](#) amdts 1.102-1.104  
 sub [A2008-3](#) s 6  
 am [A2023-53](#) s 4, s 5

**Consideration of legislation by relevant Assembly committee**

s 38 hdg sub [A2023-53](#) s 6  
 s 38 sub [A2022-4](#) amdt 1.41  
 am [A2023-53](#) s 7

**Obligations of public authorities**

pt 5A hdg ins [A2008-3](#) s 7

**Meaning of *public authority***

s 40 om [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.105  
 ins [A2008-3](#) s 7

**Meaning of *function of a public nature***

s 40A ins [A2008-3](#) s 7

**Public authorities must act consistently with human rights**

s 40B ins [A2008-3](#) s 7; [A2012-41](#) s 8  
 am [A2016-5](#) s 8; [A2023-53](#) s 8; [A2024-49](#) s 17

## Endnotes

4 Amendment history

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### **Legal proceedings in relation to public authority actions**

s 40C ins [A2008-3](#) s 7  
am [A2023-53](#) s 9; ss renum R15 LA; [A2023-53](#) s 10; ss renum  
R16 LA; [A2024-43](#) s 7, s 8; ss renum R17 LA  
s (8)-(10) exp 1 October 2028 (s 40C (10))

### **Other entities may choose to be subject to obligations of public authorities**

s 40D ins [A2008-3](#) s 7

### **Miscellaneous**

pt 6 hdg orig pt 6 hdg om [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.105  
(prev pt 7 hdg) renum [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.107

### **Miscellaneous**

pt 7 hdg renum as pt 6 hdg

### **Review of effect of territory laws on human rights**

s 41 om [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.105  
ins [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.106  
am [A2017-5](#) amdt 1.9, amdt 1.10

### **Review of amendments made by Human Rights (Healthy Environment) Amendment Act 2024**

s 43 exp 1 January 2007 (s 43 (3))  
ins [A2012-41](#) s 9  
exp 1 January 2016 (s 43 (3))  
ins [A2024-43](#) s 9  
exp 1 October 2028 (s 43 (4))

### **Review of Act**

s 44 exp 1 January 2010 (s 44 (2))

### **Legislation amended—sch 2**

s 45 om LA s 89 (3)

### **ICCPR source of human rights**

sch 1 am [A2016-5](#) s 9

### **ICESCR source of human rights**

sch 2 om LA s 89 (3)  
ins [A2012-41](#) s 10  
am [A2020-13](#) s 5; [A2024-43](#) s 10

### **Dictionary**

dict am [A2008-3](#) s 8; [A2016-52](#) amdt 1.102; [A2017-5](#) amdt 1.11  
def **act** ins [A2008-3](#) s 9  
def **commission** ins [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.108  
def **court** sub [A2008-36](#) amdt 1.351  
def **ICESCR** ins [A2012-41](#) s 11



def ***function of a public nature*** ins [A2008-3](#) s 9  
def ***human rights commissioner*** om [A2005-41](#) amdt 1.109  
def ***public authority*** ins [A2008-3](#) s 9

## Endnotes

### 5 Earlier republishings

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#### 5 Earlier republishings

Some earlier republishings were not numbered. The number in column 1 refers to the publication order.

Since 12 September 2001 every authorised republication has been published in electronic pdf format on the ACT legislation register. A selection of authorised republishings have also been published in printed format. These republishings are marked with an asterisk (\*) in column 1. Electronic and printed versions of an authorised republication are identical.

Republication No and date	Effective	Last amendment made by	Republication for
R1 1 July 2004	1 July 2004– 31 October 2006	not amended	new Act
R2 1 Nov 2006	1 Nov 2006– 1 Jan 2007	<a href="#">A2006-3</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2005-41</a> as amended by <a href="#">A2006-3</a>
R3 2 Jan 2007	2 Jan 2007– 17 Mar 2008	<a href="#">A2006-3</a>	commenced expiry
R4 18 Mar 2008	18 Mar 2008– 31 Dec 2008	<a href="#">A2008-3</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2008-3</a>
R5 1 Jan 2009	1 Jan 2009– 1 Feb 2009	<a href="#">A2008-36</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2008-3</a>
R6 2 Feb 2009	2 Feb 2009– 1 Jan 2010	<a href="#">A2008-36</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2008-36</a>
R7* 2 Jan 2010	2 Jan 2010– 31 Dec 2012	<a href="#">A2008-36</a>	commenced expiry
R8* 1 Jan 2013	1 Jan 2013– 1 Jan 2016	<a href="#">A2012-41</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2012-41</a>
R9 2 Jan 2016	2 Jan 2016– 25 Feb 2016	<a href="#">A2012-41</a>	expiry of provision (s 43)
R10 26 Feb 2016	26 Feb 2016– 31 Aug 2016	<a href="#">A2016-5</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2016-5</a>
R11 1 Sept 2016	1 Sept 2016– 1 Mar 2017	<a href="#">A2016-52</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2016-52</a>

Republication No and date	Effective	Last amendment made by	Republication for
R12 2 Mar 2017	2 Mar 2017– 13 May 2020	<a href="#">A2017-5</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2017-5</a>
R13 14 May 2020	14 May 2020– 5 Apr 2022	<a href="#">A2020-13</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2020-13</a>
R14 6 Apr 2022	6 Apr 2022– 11 Dec 2023	<a href="#">A2022-4</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2022-4</a>
R15 12 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2023– 10 June 2024	<a href="#">A2023-53</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2023-53</a>
R16 11 June 2024	11 June 2024– 16 Mar 2025	<a href="#">A2023-53</a>	amendments by <a href="#">A2023-53</a>
R16 (RI) 17 Sept 2024	11 June 2024– 16 Mar 2025	<a href="#">A2023-53</a>	reissued for retrospective amendments by <a href="#">A2024-49</a>