



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

everyone, everywhere, everyday

2008-2011 Strategic Plan



The Australian Human
Rights Commission's
strategic plan for
July 2008 – June 2011

Strategic 2008- Plan 2011

Strategic 2008- Plan 2011



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everyone, everywhere, everyday

This strategic plan can be found in electronic format on the Australian Human Rights Commission's website at:

www.humanrights.gov.au/about/strategic_plan.html

For further information about the Commission please visit

www.humanrights.gov.au or call **1300 369 711**.

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Foreword

In 2008, the Australian Human Rights Commission celebrated 21 years of operation.

We used this milestone as an opportunity to take stock of our achievements and reflect on how to improve and grow as an organisation. We did this through processes involving all staff in the Commission and some key external stakeholders.

Our revised vision and mission statements and this strategic plan set out our ambitions resulting from this process.

We can be proud of our achievements to date. Over the past 21 years we have evolved as a strong, internationally-renowned, independent human rights institution and we have grappled with a wide range of complex human rights issues. We maintain a best practice complaint handling service; we have led change on significant human rights issues through our national inquiries, reports to Parliament, submissions, educational materials and other activities.

As an organisation, we are empowered through federal legislation to perform a wide variety of functions to protect and promote human rights in Australia. For some functions, like our complaint handling service, we are obliged to respond to the specific demands made of us in the best way that we can. For other functions we have a wide discretion as to what types of activities and projects will most effectively address Australia's human rights issues. Accordingly, this strategic plan is as much about how we exercise our discretion, how we work as an organisation and how we work with others, as it is about what we do. It describes what we want to change about the way we work to have an even greater impact on the enjoyment of human rights in Australia.

This strategic plan also reflects the strong desire of all staff to work more collaboratively and creatively to maximise our impact on human rights. Initially we will focus on strengthening our internal systems so that we can learn from, inspire and build on each other's expertise and experience. That internal strength will inform the way that we work with and influence the community around us. It will also empower us to fulfil our commitment to lead by example.

Ultimately, the purpose of this plan is to maximise our contribution to creating an Australian society where human rights are enjoyed by everyone, everywhere, everyday.

Susan Roberts

Executive Director

September 2008



Having an
even greater
impact on the
enjoyment of
human rights
in Australia

Our vision and mission

What is our vision?

Human rights: everyone, everywhere, everyday

What is our mission?

Leading the promotion and protection of human rights in Australia by:

- making human rights values part of everyday life and language
- empowering all people to understand and exercise their human rights
- working with individuals, community, business and government to inspire action
- keeping government accountable to national and international human rights standards
- securing an Australian charter of rights

We do this by:

- listening, learning, communicating and educating
- being open, expert, committed and impartial
- fostering a collaborative, diverse, flexible, respectful and innovative workplace

Our vision

Human rights:
everyone,
everywhere,
everyday

Our core work

Who are we?

In 1986 the federal parliament established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as an independent statutory organisation charged with protecting and promoting the human rights of all people in Australia. In September 2008 we changed our name to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

What are our responsibilities?

The Commission is responsible for administering the following federal laws:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

The Commission also has specific responsibilities under the Native Title Act 1993 (performed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner) and the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (performed by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner).

As well as establishing the Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 gives the Commission responsibilities in relation to the following human rights instruments:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child
- Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

How do we fulfill our responsibilities?

Federal legislation empowers us with a range of functions to fulfill our responsibilities, including:

- handling complaints about discrimination and human rights breaches
- monitoring whether the Australian government is complying with its human rights obligations
- supporting the development of policies and laws that promote and protect human rights
- education and public awareness about human rights.

We exercise these functions by organising our work into the following areas:

- **Complaint service** – we provide information to the public about the law and the complaint process and we investigate and conciliate complaints about discrimination and breaches of human rights. Through these activities we promote and protect human rights by educating the public about discrimination and human rights. We also provide a service through which people can voice and resolve disputes regarding discrimination and human rights.
- **Policy development and research** – we conduct public inquiries and consultations and publish annual Indigenous social justice and native title reports. We write submissions to parliamentary and other inquiries, examine federal legislation, advise federal parliament and government, and work with community organisations and business on how to protect and promote human rights. Through these activities we monitor the government's human rights performance and make recommendations on how Australian law and policy could better meet our human rights obligations. We exercise leadership by bringing important human rights issues to public attention and influencing outcomes to maximise the enjoyment of human rights in Australia.

- **Education and public awareness** – we maintain an extensive website, develop publications and educational resources and get our message out into the community with a view to promoting our human rights policy positions and raising public awareness about important human rights issues.
- **Legal advocacy** – we intervene in court cases where it is important to make a human rights argument and we appear as amicus curiae to help courts in unlawful discrimination cases. Through these activities we raise awareness of human rights issues and we help to develop law that promotes and protects human rights. Our lawyers also provide us with internal legal advice.

- **International technical cooperation** – we work closely with national human rights institutions through our membership in the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. We work on technical cooperation projects in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in China and Vietnam, to share our expertise on the protection of human rights, raise public awareness and address human rights issues.
- **Personnel** – our human resources experts help us recruit the best people for the job, maintain a diverse and flexible workplace, protect our occupational health and safety, and support our learning and development needs.
- **Information technology** – our IT experts support our electronic work platforms and internal and external electronic communications needs. They also help us develop innovative electronic communication strategies.
- **Finance and administration** – our finance and administration experts support us in executing our priorities within available resources through efficient purchasing and financial management. They provide timely, relevant and reliable financial reporting and advice and ensure good corporate governance, accountability and transparency.

How does this strategic plan affect our core work?

The way we execute our core business over the next three years will be influenced by the goals, targets, success measures and activities set out in this strategic plan. Not all areas of the strategic plan will apply to all our core business in the same way. Each team will reexamine what they do and how they do it in the context of the strategy and framework set out in the following pages.



Our three year strategic plan (July 2008 – June 2011)

We are committed to undertaking our core business in a way that best achieves our vision and mission.

Our strategic plan is about building on our strengths and identifying what we want to do better so that we can move closer towards an Australia where human rights really are for everyone, everywhere, everyday. The plan is as much about how we work as what we do.

What are our five strategic goals?

To achieve our vision and mission we will integrate the following five strategic goals into our work:

1. Leadership

We exercise a leadership role in human rights in Australia by being visible, courageous and influential on human rights issues.

2. Empowerment

We support and inspire others to engage in meaningful activity on human rights.

3. Education

We assist all people in Australia to understand and exercise their rights and respect the rights of others.

4. Monitoring

We hold individuals, organisations and government responsible for their human rights obligations.

5. Innovation

We have a collaborative, innovative and supportive work culture that enhances the quality and impact of our work.

In the following pages we identify the following for each of the strategic goals:

- Our three year targets – what we want to achieve by 30 June 2011
- Our success measures – how we will know if we have achieved our three year targets
- Our activities – the practical steps we will take to reach our targets over the next three years



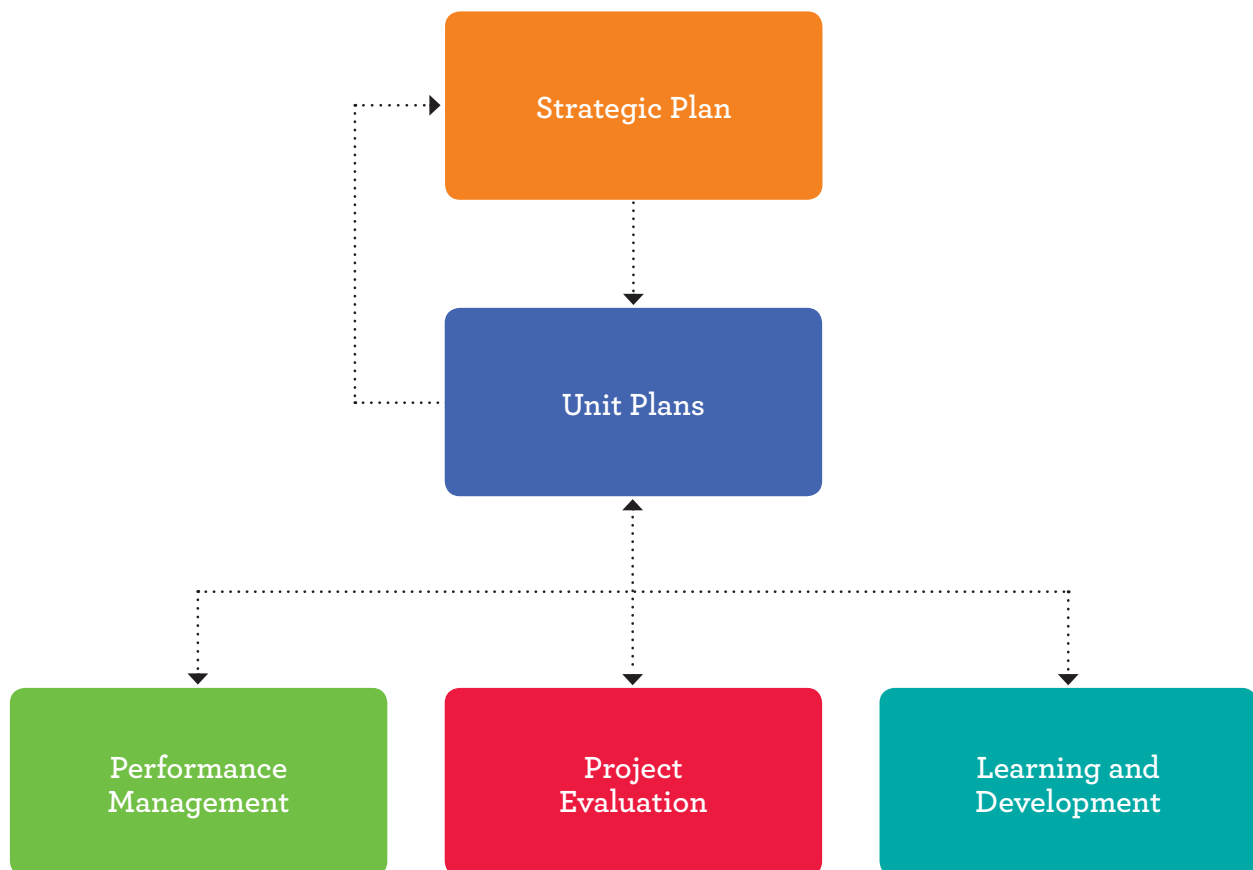
Leadership
Empowerment
Education
Monitoring
Innovation

How will we integrate the strategic goals into our work?

Our strategic plan is built on the understanding that the five key strategic goals will be the touchstone for everything we do. Our strategic goals, targets, success measures and activities will inform the planning, consultation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation processes for all of our work.

To help do this we will develop a coordinated unit planning process that synchronises with the budget planning process. We will also develop guidelines that help match the unit plans with the strategic plan.

The following diagram sets out the framework for integrating the strategic goals into our work.



Integration matrix

This matrix provides more information on each of the elements in our integration framework. It identifies the main actions we will take across the Commission, the outcomes we are looking for and who has the primary responsibility for implementing those measures.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility
Individual unit planning integrates the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each unit plan clearly identifies how team activities implement the strategic plan • The unit planning process leverages the expertise and experience available in the Commission • Unit plans are shared across the Commission and published on intranet 	All staff, led by unit managers
Performance management scheme integrates the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All performance agreements include performance indicators relating to the achievement of the strategic goals 	Personnel to coordinate agreements with unit managers All staff responsible for meeting performance measures
Project evaluation integrates the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All projects and activities incorporate an evaluation component designed to measure our impact against our strategic goals • We document our progress towards achieving our strategic goals 	Executive Director and unit managers (supported by an internal advisory team on evaluation and Evaluation ToolKit)
Learning and development framework supports capacity of staff to implement the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission-wide learning and development framework identifies staff capacity building needed to achieve strategic goals • Framework includes opportunities to learn from internal and external expertise • Staff participate in training and feedback reflects strong professional and personal value 	Personnel services to coordinate in consultation with unit managers All staff to participate in delivery of and attendance in learning opportunities

What if our environment changes over the next three years?

This strategic plan is intended to be a dynamic, living document that changes to reflect what we learn and achieve over time and to adapt to our changing internal and external environment.

We will review our progress every six months and update the plan annually, based on the results of our review and evaluation.

The review process will be led by the Executive Director. It will be designed to engage the President, Commissioners and staff in the ongoing review and evaluation.

Strategic Goal 1: Leadership

Our goal:

We exercise a leadership role in human rights in Australia by being visible, courageous and influential on human rights issues.

Our three year target:

By 2011, we expect to see that:

- We have a strong presence in all sectors of the media whenever human rights issues important to us are discussed and debated
- We have substantial influence in putting new and important human rights issues into the public arena
- We have a greater influence on federal government human rights policy
- We are a central player in securing a federal charter of rights
- We motivate big business to incorporate human rights into their everyday business practice
- We influence courts to develop progressive approaches to human rights
- Our complaint process is recognised as a central component in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Our success measures:

We will know we have reached our 2011 targets if:

- All sectors of the media routinely quote us in important human rights discussions and consider us to be the main authority on human rights in Australia
- The federal government routinely consults us when developing policy with human rights implications and our recommendations have substantial influence on parliamentary and government debate and decisions

- The community sector comes to us to when they need help in putting an important human rights issue into the public arena
- Australia has a charter of rights and we can demonstrate our significant role in that outcome
- 50% of the top 100 Australian companies see us as a primary Australian resource on business and human rights
- We make court submissions on human rights that other individuals or organisations cannot or will not make and these submissions influence courts
- Our complaint service is highly utilised and we are recognised for excellence in complaint handling theory and practice.

Our activities:

In order to achieve our targets we will:

- Develop media strategies to target media outlets that we do not currently capture
- Develop communications strategies which promote us as a leader in human rights and our issues as important for public discussion
- Develop a cross-commission strategy to identify opportunities to shape government policy for human rights outcomes
- Conduct a cross-commission charter of rights project
- Conduct a cross-commission project on business and human rights
- Implement an integrated public awareness strategy in relation to the complaint service and complaint service achievements.

Strategic Goal 2: Empowerment

Our goal:

We support and inspire others to engage in meaningful activity on human rights.

Our three year target:

By 2011, we expect to see that:

- We work closely with a diversity of community organisations and community leaders who increase our reach into communities that we do not currently capture and engage those communities on the human rights issues important to us
- We have strong relationships with a wide range of organisations and leaders who work with us to improve human rights policy and the enjoyment of human rights
- We support individuals, community organisations and businesses to actively engage in the federal government's national consultation on the protection and promotion of human rights
- Contact and involvement with the complaint service encourages positive action in support of human rights.

Our success measures:

We will know we have reached our targets if:

- We work closely with a greater diversity of community groups and leaders and at least 50% of them actively engage their communities on the human rights issues important to us
- Our collaboration with organisations and leaders results in improvements to human rights policy and the enjoyment of human rights
- We have engaged a large number of community organisations to participate in the federal government's national consultation on the protection and promotion of human rights and to access our web resources
- Our data and feedback indicates that involvement with the complaint service supports the promotion and protection of human rights.

Our activities:

In order to achieve our targets we will:

- Identify the community stakeholders with whom we want to work closely and develop a commission-wide strategy to engage them in promoting the human rights issues important to us
- Identify effective partnership models and use them when appropriate to advance our engagement and advocacy strategies
- Identify individuals, community organisations and businesses we want to participate in the federal government's national consultation on a charter of rights and develop a strategy to engage them
- Obtain and reflect on data in relation to key aspects of complaint service delivery.



Support
and inspire
people to
engage

Strategic Goal 3: Education

Our goal:

We assist all people in Australia to understand and exercise their rights and respect the rights of others.

Our three year target:

By 2011, we expect to see that:

- People come to our website when they want to learn about human rights
- Our human rights message regularly appears in mainstream and new media
- Our human rights message reaches and engages young people
- Our human rights message reaches the business and community sectors
- People from diverse sections of the Australian community understand how the complaint process can be used to voice and resolve human rights disputes.

Our success measures:

We will know we have reached our targets if:

- We have an annual 25% increase in the number of unique visitors to our website
- We have an annual 25% increase in the number of people signing up to our mailing lists and RSS feeds
- We have an annual 50% increase in the number of people participating in our electronic forums
- The human rights issues important to us are frequently discussed on commercial television and radio, major metropolitan newspapers, and new media
- The human rights issues important to us are frequently discussed in electronic forums used by young people
- There is increased understanding of the relevance of human rights in the business and community sectors
- The national, state and territory curriculum frameworks include material about protection of human rights in Australia

- We are a primary resource on human rights issues for educators in schools, universities and community groups
- There is increased knowledge and use of the complaint service across diverse sections of the Australian community.

Our activities:

In order to achieve our targets we will:

- Promote our website to groups and individuals we do not currently capture
- Improve our website design, function and content so that it is accessible, interactive and appealing to all people
- Develop and implement new strategies to get our human rights message into mainstream and new media
- Develop and implement new strategies to target young people
- Work with business and community sectors to develop effective education strategies
- Develop new strategies to engage education stakeholders who can influence the content and delivery of curriculum frameworks
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure an accessible and effective complaint service.



Help people
understand,
exercise
and respect
human rights

Strategic Goal 4: Monitoring

Our goal:

We hold individuals, organisations and government responsible for their human rights obligations.

Our three year target:

By 2011, we expect to see that:

- The federal government seriously considers our policy recommendations and either implements them or regularly reassesses its refusal to implement
- We influence the development and implementation of an effective national strategy to implement Australia's human rights obligations, including a review of equality laws
- United Nations treaty bodies seek and adopt our recommendations about Australia's human rights performance.

Our success measures:

We will know we have reached our 2011 targets if:

- The federal government responds to all our human rights policy recommendations
- The federal government consults us to develop an effective national strategy to implement Australia's human rights obligations, including improved equality laws, and adopts our recommendations
- United Nations treaty bodies adopt our findings and recommendations.

Our activities:

In order to achieve our targets we will:

- Develop, incorporate and pursue clear cross-commission strategies to secure the implementation of our human rights policy recommendations to the federal government
- Make a leading contribution to the federal government's anti-discrimination law harmonisation working group and other initiatives to improve and implement a national action plan on human rights
- Advise government appearing before UN treaty bodies and participate in our own right where appropriate.



Hold
individuals,
organisations
and
government
responsible for
human rights

Strategic Goal 5: Innovation

Our goal:

We have a collaborative, innovative and supportive work culture that enhances the quality and impact of our work.

Our three year target:

By 2011, we expect to see that:

- We can access the internal information and expertise we need to help do our job
- Our work leverages and reflects the internal expertise, diversity, skill, experience and knowledge of our staff
- Our work culture encourages us to be creative and innovative in our work
- We consistently evaluate the impact of our work and implement the learning from those evaluations
- We have a strong learning and development program
- We lead by example by holding ourselves to the human rights standards that we expect of others
- We have a diverse workforce provided with a range of workplace flexibilities
- We minimise our environmental impact
- We demonstrate corporate responsibility and good governance in all our actions
- We regularly assess our priorities to ensure that we are maximising the return for the community.

Our success measures:

We will know we have reached our 2011 targets if:

- Our intranet is a successful platform for electronic collaboration and information-sharing
- We consistently seek and share expertise, experiences and skills
- We feel confident about developing and sharing new ideas and have a forum to propose new ideas to management

- We incorporate evaluation strategies into all our work
- We have high participation rates in, and get positive feedback on, our learning and development program
- Our workplace culture and practices are a model for implementing human rights principles in the workplace
- We implement mutually beneficial workplace flexibility options and strategies
- We reduce our environmental footprint
- We make progress towards our corporate responsibility goals.

Our activities:

In order to achieve our targets we will:

- Develop an accessible, current and interactive intranet
- Create opportunities for staff to contribute and share experiences, expertise and new ideas
- Conduct cross-commission collaborative projects and submissions to address current issues
- Identify where we need to build staff capacity to achieve our strategic goals and develop a learning and development program to address those needs
- Develop strategies to implement human rights values in our workplace, including through a best practice reconciliation action plan and disability action plan
- Improve flexible workplace provisions in conjunction with the Certified Agreement Process and review our recruitment strategies to showcase existing flexible and diverse workplace provisions
- Develop and implement a green office and corporate responsibility policy
- Listen to government as business owners and the community as recipients of our services to ensure we continue to meet the needs of all our stakeholder and customer groups.

