



ANTI DISCRIMINATION
COMMISSION QUEENSLAND

Media Release

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“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” - International Human Rights Day 2009

Although 61 years have passed since the United Nations proclaimed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, International Human Rights Day is still an occasion when we can reflect on the meaning and importance of human rights, according to Neroli Holmes, the Acting Commissioner of the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ).

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ are the opening words of the *Universal Declaration* and is the basic premise of human rights law, yet discrimination is still experienced by many Queenslanders today, despite the protection of the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*.” Ms Holmes said.

The ADCQ received 5000 enquiries and 840 written complaints in 2008-09 with the majority of complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of impairment, sexual harassment, sex, race, family responsibilities, victimisation and pregnancy.

Ms Holmes said, “Although many Australians still experience discrimination, there have been significant developments in human rights in Australia this year – on 3 April 2009 Australia endorsed the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and over 30,000 Australians contributed their views on Human Rights to the National Human Rights Consultation, which released its report in October 2009.”

The Federal Government also recently announced that in 2010 it would reinstate the federal *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, which were suspended in relation to welfare payment reforms in five Cape York communities in Queensland.

The ADCQ marked its celebration of International Human Rights Day with the *Living Books, Local People, Remarkable Lives* event held in Cairns on Sunday 6 December at the Cairns Tanks Arts Centre.

Local identities, including Narayan Mishra who spent 17 years in refugee camps before finding haven in Australia, shared stories of how they overcame discrimination with more than 450 guests who attended the event.

Other ‘Living Books’ shared stories of overcoming adversity and discrimination due to their age, disabilities or their gender identity.

Reach for the Stars, My Darling, an exhibition of anti-discrimination posters sourced from Commission archives and other anti-discrimination bodies, was also launched on Sunday.

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The exhibition illustrates how artists and graphic designers have taken complex and emotive issues associated with discrimination, and turned long-held perceptions on their heads, often through the use of humour.

The exhibition runs at the Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns from 9.30am– 4.30pm until 22 January 2010.

Interview opportunities: Acting Commissioner Neroli Holmes - Human Rights Day
Janice McFadden, Regional Manager – Far North – *Living Books* and *Reach for the Stars My Darling*

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