

Media Release

Human Rights Law Centre | **For immediate release: Thursday 2 April 2020**

Parliamentary scrutiny of COVID-19 response is vital in public health emergency: Civil society and legal groups

Eight legal and civil society groups have today called on the Australian Senate to establish a Select Committee with broad powers to review and report on the Federal Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are living through an unprecedented global crisis that is touching every aspect of our lives. Australians are looking to the Morrison Government to guide the country through the COVID-19 public health emergency. With the Federal Government asking people to make extraordinary sacrifices, trust and confidence in leadership has never been more important. A strong commitment from Government to transparent decision-making and parliamentary scrutiny is vital.

The Senate must establish the Select Senate Committee when it reconvenes, for potentially just one day, next Wednesday. A Select Senate Committee will provide a vital avenue to business, civil society groups and individuals to provide information to inform Government decision-making and feedback on the impact of those decisions, so that no one is left behind and no one is left in the dark.

The NSW and New Zealand Governments have already established committees to oversee their Governments' response to COVID-19.

A Select Senate Committee is just a part of the solution – Australians also need regular parliamentary processes to continue. It is vital that our Parliament sit, in a way that is safe, so it can make decisions rapidly as the pandemic unfolds.

The Hon Anthony Whealy QC, Chair of The Centre for Public Integrity and former Judge of the NSW Court of Appeal:

"The response to the coronavirus has seen billions of dollars of public money spent. The vast amount of public money involved means accountability and parliamentary scrutiny is needed more than ever.

"Other parliamentary democracies dealing with outbreaks of coronavirus, including France, Spain, UK and US have all continued to sit and scrutinise government legislation. Our MPs must continue to represent the Australian people in Parliament."

Alice Drury, Senior Lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre:

“The Government must be responsive to the needs of communities as the crisis unfolds, which means creating avenues for their decisions to be constructively scrutinised, and where they can hear feedback from the public about what’s working, and what isn’t. Now is the time for our Parliament to shine, not shut down.”

Media contact:

Michelle Bennett, Communications Director, Human Rights Law Centre, 0419 100 519



Melbourne VIC 3000

ABN: 31 117 719 267

[Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

