

Foreword

Recent decisions by the High Court of Australia in *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)*, *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth* and *Dietrich v The Queen*, and the decision in the *Toonen* case by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, reflect the growing importance of human rights principles in the development of our legal system. This has contributed to an increased interest by politicians, judges, academics, bureaucrats and members of the public, in human rights and their application on local, state, national and international levels.

This growing interest in human rights in Australia has not, until now, seen the appearance of a high quality journal devoted exclusively to discussion of human rights scholarship. The *Australian Journal of Human Rights* arises to fill this gap by gathering together the most recent writings on a range of topics which may be grouped under the umbrella of 'human rights'.

The *Australian Journal of Human Rights* adopts a broad approach to its subject. It focuses not simply on human rights developments in Australia but other developments around the world, most particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region. It also takes a multidisciplinary approach to human rights issues. Some of the articles contained in this first issue are written by lawyers and deal with laws and legal practices as they affect peoples' fundamental human rights. Other articles discuss economic, historical, sociological, political and philosophical issues.

The significance of human rights is evidenced by the fact that the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Sir Anthony Mason, leads the distinguished authors who have contributed to this first issue of the *Australian Journal of Human Rights*. They examine issues as topical and political as racial vilification, judicial review as a mechanism for ensuring compliance with human rights standards and Aboriginal land rights. This issue also gives detailed treatment to the sentencing of political offenders, genocide, the right to a prompt trial and the effects of debt reduction programs used by world financial institutions. Many of the most important recent decisions in the field of human rights are reviewed and even forthcoming legislation is critically analysed. The content is balanced, highly informative and thought-provoking.

I am pleased to be involved as a patron of the *Australian Journal of Human Rights* and to have the pleasure of writing the foreword to this issue. The Human Rights Centre is to be congratulated on the publication as is the University of New South Wales for funding this important project. Congratulations must also go to the members of the Editorial Board without whose commitment to human rights there would be no *Australian Journal of Human Rights*.

The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AO

