



MEDIA RELEASE  
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### **Australian government removes the right to vote of Australian prisoners**

“The Australian Government’s proposed electoral changes will strip some Australians of a basic democratic – the right to vote”, says Carla Klease, spokesperson for Australian Lawyers for Human Rights.

“Proposed amendments to the Commonwealth *Electoral Act 1918* will deny all Australian citizens serving a full time sentence of imprisonment the right to vote.

The legislation is scheduled to be debated on Thursday 9 February 2006.

“No evidence has been put forward that removing the right to vote will in any reduce crime. Exercising that democratic right is probably the last thing on a criminal’s mind.

“However, it is important for the reformation and social rehabilitation of a prisoner that they be taught the value of democratic values and social responsibility.

“These changes to the Electoral Act are likely to isolate prisoners, and will undermine respect for law and democracy.

“The right of every citizen to vote without distinction is a right enshrined in international human rights law to which Australia is a party. It is also arguably protected as an implied right under Australia’s Constitution.

“Similar legislation in the United Kingdom and Canada has been found to be unlawful because it breached human rights laws.

“The amendments will also disproportionately affect Australia’s indigenous population who are over-represented in Australian prisons.”

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