



## MEDIA RELEASE

On Sunday 17 March, the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church (MUPMC) in East Melbourne launched a campaign to lobby the Australian Parliament for a Charter of Human Rights.

Australia urgently needs a Charter of Human Rights. We are the only Western liberal democracy without one. Repressive legislation, racism and the move to the extreme right, here and across the world, have resulted in the loss of democracy and human rights. A Charter of Human Rights would stand as a protection when we need to defend those under attack for protecting themselves and their society from ill intention.

Almost 150 delegates representing other churches, political parties, ethnic groups including the Islamic Council, unions, and community and social justice organisations attended to hear four keynote speakers and to formulate a campaign to mobilise support.

Delegates heard from Professor Rob Watts (Professor of Social Policy, RMIT); barrister and civil right campaigner, Julian Burnside QC; Hugh de Kretser of the Human Rights Law Centre, and former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Professor Gillian Triggs before breaking into workshops.

The Forum concluded with the passing of a resolution that expressed attendees' *"absolute commitment to the establishment of an Australian Charter of Human Rights."*

The resolution continued: *"We take this position because we note the serious deterioration in the economic, social, and political situation we are confronting. We reject the introduction of legislation that will lessen our political and democratic rights."*

*We totally oppose the rise in racism and the move to the extreme right and the resulting corruption that is emerging in our society. We view with concern the attacks on the trade union movement and attempts to shackle its ability to represent its members. We express our determination to oppose racism, rising fascism and corruption and to fight for social justice, democratic rights, and opposition to poverty and exploitation in Australia.*

*For this reason, we demand that the process to introduce a Human Rights Charter be immediately pursued.*

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