

War-torn backdrop of suffering illustrates how much



Independent MLC Meg Webb.

Happy 75th birthday to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights!

We celebrate this milestone on December 10, International Human Rights Day, which marks the date in 1948 on which the UN General Assembly formally adopted the declaration.

For 75 years the declaration has set the global benchmark for equality, fundamental freedoms and justice by enshrining the rights of all human beings, no matter race, religion, sex, wealth, language, ethnic origin or

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other status. It seeks to provide the blueprint for local, national and international human rights laws, conventions, treaties and policies.

Sadly, this significant anniversary arrives at a time of shocking global crises.

Yet that war-torn backdrop of human suffering and trauma only

serves to heighten the urgent need across international, national, state and local levels for people to stand up to defend and deliver the UN declaration's goals of peace, justice and equality for all.

It may surprise some to learn that 75 years ago our nation was a key driver behind the development of the

declaration, described by the Australian Human Rights Commission as "one of the most important documents ever written in human history".

Then-Australian foreign minister Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, otherwise known as "Doc", was pivotal to the declaration's drafting and was president of the UN General Assembly at the time it was signed in Paris on December 10, 1948.

If Doc Evatt was here now raising a toast to mark the 75-year milestone of this gargantuan policy "baby" he helped bring into the world, I wonder

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Tasmania needs to focus on ensuring human rights

how he would assess local efforts to deliver its commitments.

I imagine Doc Evatt would be pleased to see Australia has an independent Human Rights Commission, but even more impressed with the decisive action taken by Victoria, the ACT and Queensland to legislate their own human rights acts.

I think he would be quite chuffed to recognise the invisible but indivisible threads connecting the UN declaration's principles to the foundations underpinning each of those interstate acts.

Doc Evatt would share a keen interest in how those frameworks have worked to protect the human rights of Queenslanders, Victorians and Territorians when their respective governments developed policies and laws that could have impacted people and communities.

However, I could also hear him asking "Where is the Tasmanian human rights Act?" – particularly given the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute (TLRI) recommended we legislate a Charter of Human Rights back in 2007.

Would Doc Evatt sigh with

impatience, as many of us have, when informed that a follow-up TLRI review remains under way and expected sometime in the new year?

We urgently need the same clear-sighted perceptiveness that enabled Doc Evatt to identify the need for a Declaration of Human Rights to not just repudiate the inhumane horrors of World War II, but to also provide a framework by which humanity can face future challenges while respecting each other and our common ground.

We know there are new and emerging challenges to people's

human rights locally, nationally and globally, which Doc Evatt probably never envisioned, such as AI and climate change, while the impacts of homelessness and the cost of living remain corrosive challenges to our human rights.

At a time when human rights are being eroded around the world, now is the time for all tiers of government to stand up and formally recognise and protect human rights.

What better way to mark the 75th anniversary, and Doc Evatt's vision, than by enshrining in legislation those universal and inalienable rights

we all have as human beings?

By acknowledging and protecting Tasmanians' rights under the law, we are saying that as a democratic, equitable and inclusive society we believe in the dignity and worth of all people.

To paraphrase the UN's slogan commemorating the 75 years of the declaration, the time for a Tasmanian human rights Act is now.

Add your voice to the call – #humanrights75.

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