



PRIME MINISTER

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REJECTS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT

The Australian Government rejects the characterisation of Australia and her human rights record contained in Amnesty International's 2007 annual report, as well as reported comments about Australia by Amnesty International's secretary general.

The report's entry on Australia contains a string of assertions, unsupported by evidence and devoid of context. The report's treatment of Australia amounts to little more than a shoddy caricature. Nowhere is the report's political agenda clearer than the paragraph in its foreword which seeks to bracket Australian and US policies with the horrendous human rights situation in Darfur and Robert Mugabe's disastrous misrule in Zimbabwe.

I respect Amnesty International's historical commitment to protecting human rights. Regrettably, however, the organisation's current leadership seems to have lost sight of the need for any balance or rigour and has succumbed to the easy lure of moral relativism.

Australia has a proud record as a tolerant, fair and open society, second to none in its generosity and its contribution to upholding human rights around the world. I believe many Australians will be as offended by this report as I am.

Since 1996 Australia has accepted more than 100,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants. We have comprehensive policies in place to tackle domestic and family violence. Government spending on indigenous affairs in 2007-08 will be a record \$3.5 billion. The Government's policies are subject to robust public and parliamentary debate and to administrative and judicial review.

My Government makes no apology for taking appropriate, balanced steps to protect the Australian public from the very real threat of terrorism and to protect our borders.

Amnesty International's report has done more damage to its own credibility than it has Australia's.

24 May 2007