

9th April 2018



An Australian Bill of Rights

Professor Gillian Triggs has called for an Australian Bill of Rights.

Professor Triggs was addressing the Annual Conference of Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) in Wodonga on Friday evening, 6 April.

“Unlike almost every other comparable country Australia has no bill of rights against which government policies, legislation and actions can be benchmarked,” Professor Triggs told the 300-strong conference.

She gave examples of how the human rights of people seeking asylum have suffered because courts have not had such a legal tool to use.

“Papua New Guinea has a modern constitution, including a guarantee of human rights, including the right to not be unlawfully deprived of one’s liberty. This enabled the PNG High Court to rule that it was unconstitutional to detain refugees on Manus Island” added Ms Triggs.

The RAR Conference also heard from local federal member, Cathy McGowan, MHR, who applauded the work of many of the RAR-affiliated groups around Australia in supporting people seeking our country’s protection.

The conference continued over the weekend with guests Julian Burnside, AO QC, Sr Jan Barnett of the Sisters of St Joseph, Prof Stuart Hill of the University of Western Sydney, Madeline Gleeson of the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at the University of NSW among a range of keynote speakers and workshop leaders.

The Tampa Award was presented to Behrouz Bouchani who was present via phone in front of an emotion charged auditorium.