

Human Rights for Australia, by Alice Ehr-Soon Tey (Human Rights Commission Monograph Series No. 1, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986) pp. i - xvi, 1-351, index 352-360. ISBN 0 644 03432 7.

As the sub-title makes clear, this volume consists of "a survey of literature and developments" and "a select and annotated bibliography of recent literature in Australia and abroad". The work is certainly timely, for there is now a huge literature on human rights spanning several disciplines, including law, philosophy, and political science. With the assistance of the Department of Jurisprudence at the University of Sydney, and the History of Ideas Unit at the Australian National University, the author has undertaken the daunting task of reviewing not just the literature itself, but the post-war developments, both internationally and locally, which have given rise to it. The result is an excellent introductory guide to the complex and diverse topics falling under the general heading of "human rights", which should be of great assistance to researcher, teacher, student and general reader alike.

The survey starts by examining the growth of the international human rights movement, considering the numerous human rights declarations, their status in international law, and the problems involved with getting signatory states to implement and safeguard them. Australia's own record is then set out. Constitutional problems arising from our federal system are examined, as is the issue of whether human rights are already adequately protected by the common law. The role of the Human Rights Commission and the vexed question of whether Australia should have a Bill of Rights are considered. Specific human rights areas, such as Aborigines, the mentally retarded and the physically disabled, and the rights of the child are then examined. A section co-authored with Professor Eugene Kamenka on the philosophical bases of human rights follows. This serves to introduce the balance of the survey which is concerned with long-standing issues on the human rights agenda: equality and affirmative action; the right to life, abortion and euthanasia; freedom of expression and civil disobedience. In considering all these topics, serious effort is made within the obvious constraints of space to examine both the relevant Australian and overseas law, and the underlying moral issues.

The bibliography is organised around four main headings: Human Rights (General), Civil and Political Rights, Discrimination, and Rights of Special Groups. Obvious problems of classification appear to be handled well, with numerous sub-headings and considerable cross-referencing. Over 3,000 works are listed, many of them annotated.

For anyone working in human rights, and associated areas, this book provides the obvious starting point. All those involved are to be highly commended for getting the Human Rights Monograph Series off to such a good start.

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