**An Act** is a statute or law passed by both Houses of Parliament that has received Royal Assent. On Royal Assent, Acts are given a year and number.

**Government Policy** can be used to describe any course of action which intends to change a certain situation.

**Multiculturalism** the term had been introduced and migrant groups were forming state and national associations to maintain their cultures, and promote the survival of their languages and heritages within mainstream institutions.

**Harmony Day** was established in 1999 and is now celebrated by thousands of Australians each year, spreading a message of inclusiveness, respect and belonging for everyone.

**The Road Home: A national approach to reducing homelessness**

21 December 2008, the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the Minister for Housing released the Government's White Paper, 'The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness'.

* halve overall homelessness by 2020
* offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers by 2020.

**The White Paper** outlines a national approach to reduce homelessness that will be implemented through three main strategies:

* Turning off the tap
* Improving and expanding services
* Breaking the cycle

Funding for The Road Home initiatives is administered through the **National Affordable Housing Agreement.**

The NAHA is supported by the **National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness** (NPAH) which funds homelessness programs to 2013. The NPAH outlines the roles and responsibilities of the federal and state governments in meeting the goals and objectives set out in the **White Paper**.

**National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)**

Aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation. The NAHA is an agreement by the Council of Australian Governments that commenced on 1 January 2009, initiating a whole-of-government approach in tackling the problem of housing affordability. The NAHA provides $6.2 billion worth of housing assistance to low and middle income Australians in the first five years. The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreements on:

* Social housing
* Homelessness
* Indigenous Australians living in remote areas

**National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)**

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) funds around 180 programs and services for people who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. These programs assist 80,000 people each year and employ more than 3,000 staff.

**Australia's Multicultural Policy**

The approach articulates the rights and responsibilities that are fundamental to living in Australia and supports the rights of all to celebrate, practise and maintain their cultural traditions within the law and free from discrimination. It also aims to strengthen social cohesion through promoting belonging, respecting diversity and fostering engagement with Australian values, identity and citizenship, within the framework of Australian law.

Statement; October 1996; Australian Parliament's House of Representatives.

* reaffirms its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin
* reaffirms its commitment to maintaining an immigration policy wholly non-discriminatory on grounds of race, colour creed or origin
* reaffirms its commitment to the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in the context of redressing their profound social and economic disadvantage
* reaffirms its commitment to maintain Australia as a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, united by an overriding commitment to our nation, and its democratic institutions and values
* denounces racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to.

**Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission; 5 Acts**

* Racial discrimination act 1975
* Age Discrimination Act 2004
* Sex Discrimination Act 1984
* Disability Discrimination Act 1992
* Australian Human Rights Commission Act

**It is against the law to discriminate in areas such as:**

* Employment (when seeking employment, training, promotion, equal pay or conditions of employment.)
* Land, housing or accommodation (When buying a house or land or when renting a unit)
* Provision of goods and services (When buying something, applying for credit, using banks, seeking assistance from government departments, lawyers, doctors and hospitals, or attending restaurants)
* Access to places and facilities for use by the public (for example, when trying to into parks, libraries, government offices, hotels, places of worship, entertainment centres, hire cars and so on.);
* Advertising (a job advertisement which states that people from a certain ethnic group cannot apply.)
* Joining a trade union.

**Who can make a complaint?**

* One or more persons who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, on their own behalf or on behalf of other people who have been discriminated against in the same way;
* Person(s) included in a class of people who believe they have been discriminated against,
* On behalf of that class; a trade union on behalf of its members.

**Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986**

The Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (formerly called the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 ). established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now known as the Australian Human Rights Commission) and gives it functions in relation to the following international instruments:

* International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
* Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (ILO 111)
* Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* Convention on the Rights of the Child
* Declaration of the Rights of the Child
* Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
* Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons,
* and Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has specific functions under the AHRC Act and the Native Title Act,1993 to monitor the human rights of Indigenous people.

* **Racial Discrimination Act 1975**

Makes racial discrimination against the law. It aims to ensure that everyone is treated equally, regardless of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. Since the Act was passed in 1975, over 10,500 complaints have been received. Over 3,500 of these were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and over 4,000 from people of non-English speaking background. Racial discrimination happens when someone is treated less fairly than someone else in a similar situation because of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.

* **Age Discrimination Act 2004**

Helps to ensure that people are not treated less favourably on the ground of age in various areas of public life including: employment provision of goods and services education administration of Commonwealth laws and programs The Act also provides for positive discrimination – that is, actions which assist people of a particular age who experience a disadvantage because of their age. It also provides for exemptions in the following areas: superannuation migration, taxation and social security laws state laws and other Commonwealth laws some health programmes.

* **Sex Discrimination Act 1984**

Its major objectives are to promote equality between men and women eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status or pregnancy and, with respect to dismissals, family responsibilities, and eliminate sexual harassment at work, in educational institutions, in the provision of goods and services, in the provision of accommodation of programs.

* **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**

Has as its major objectives to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities promote community acceptance of the principle that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community, and ensure as far as practicable that people with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as other people in the community.

**Becoming an Australian citizen** means you call Australia home with all the privileges and responsibilities of a person who was born here. Becoming an Australian citizen means that you are making an ongoing commitment to Australia and all that this country stands for. Australia is a democracy. Citizenship gives you the opportunity to fully participate in building our democratic nation. It means that you are ready to fulfill your responsibilities as a formal member of the Australian community. Australians believe in the dignity and freedom of each person, the equality of men and women and the rule of law.

**Rights of Australia Citizens:**

* entitlement to an Australian passport and to Australian consular protection overseas
* entitlement to leave Australia and return at any time without any immigration restrictions
* immunity from deportation
* entitlement to seek employment by the Federal (Commonwealth) Government, where citizenship is normally required
* entitlement to vote and stand for public office (dual citizens cannot stand for office in the Federal Parliament unless they have taken all reasonable steps to renounce their foreign citizenship. Most states do allow dual citizens to stand for State Parliaments).
* Entitlement to healthcare, education, welfare assistance

**Responsibilities of Australian Citizens:**

* obey the law
* enrol to vote, and vote at all elections (unless there is a reasonable excuse such as a religious objection, being overseas or illness on polling day)
* serve on a jury, if called upon
* defend Australia, should the need arise.
* Pay taxes

**Civic Responsibility**

* Civic responsibility, including social participation and action, is a core element of a democratic society. - “Wanting to contribute to society”
* A self imposed moral conduct
* Providing assistance to someone in need or calling for assistance if you cannot help.

**Example of Civic Responsibility**

* Volunteering; Involves the giving of time or labour without the expectation of monetary compensation. Many people volunteer through local churches, animal shelters or food banks. Volunteering allows citizens the opportunity to share their skills and talents as well as the to learn new skills while helping those in need of assistance.

**Democratic process**

* Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives.
* Ideally, this includes equal (direct or indirect) participation in the proposal, development and passage of legislation into law.
* A democratic government is the opposite of systems where power is either held by an individual (Monarchy) or by a small number of individuals (oligarchy).
* People have the opportunity to control their leaders, to oust them without the need for a revolution or to become a leader themselves

**Injustice and inequity**

* Occurs when there has been unfairness and people are not treated in an equal manner
* Rights may not have been recognised
* People have been treated differently due to their age, religious beliefs, cultural heritage, sex, socioeconomic status
* A social injustice is the unfair inequalities felt by various classes within a society – e.g. inequalities in wealth and opportunities
* A political injustice involves the violation of individual liberties, including the denial of voting rights, infringements of rights to freedom of speech or religion.
* Economic injustice involves the state’s failure to provide individuals with basic necessities of life, such as access to adequate food and house, and its maintenance of huge discrepancies in wealth.

**What is social justice**

Social Justice is about promoting a more socially inclusive society for all people, and in particular for those groups of people most likely to be marginalised or in vulnerable situations, such as

* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders,
* children,
* people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
* people with disabilities
* older people, women

There is **equity** in the distribution of resources and people have fair access to resources

**Rights** are recognised and promoted

People are respected and accepted for their **diversity**

**A Just Society promotes:**

* Ethical behaviour
  + Knowing the principles of right and wrong
  + Being humane and acting out of a higher interest over a self-serving one
  + Protecting or advocating the rights and dignity of others
  + Promoting values of justice, fairness and tolerance
* Role of government
  + Seeks to enhance the welfare of people. A corrupt government is one whose rulers are primarily interested in selfish ends
* Law and order
  + Humans have established laws to protect individuals and society

**How can you demonstrate social justice and equality**

* Anti-discrimination policies in place
* Workplace diversity policies in place, e.g indigenous workers
* Include everyone – do not exclude
* Respect people’s differences –eg. Culture, religious beliefs, different beliefs and values
* Policies in place to prevent bullying or harassment
* Value all people’s opinions and views
* Acknowledge and cater for different learning styles
* Concern for Human Rights
* Laws in place
* Advocacy
* Agencies /organisations who promote social justice issues