

Expression of interest

Open Government Forum



I am motivated to join the Open Government Forum and to monitor and drive implementation of Australia's first National Action Plan because the work is vital to the health of Australia's democracy.

Criteria

- **Demonstrated support of OGP's vision and the Open Government Declaration**

I lead the Human Rights Law Centre's work to protect democracy in Australia. We are committed to ensuring that Australian government is as open and transparent as possible. In February 2016, we launched [Safeguarding Democracy](#), a report that highlighted some of the trends that are threatening democracy here, with 38 recommendations for positive, proactive law and policy reform. The report was launched with the support of community and environmental organisations, journalists, philanthropists, faith-based groups and unions.

- **Expertise relevant to the Open Government Partnership**

The work I lead at the HRLC includes legal action, advocacy, research, education and UN engagement aimed at promoting open and transparent government, improving whistleblowers protections and better protecting data privacy. It also focuses on voting rights and ensuring the integrity of Australia's electoral system through proper access for people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people experiencing homelessness.

In June 2017 we launched a report, [Defending Democracy](#) that examines threats to the ability of NGOs to advocate and argues against a ban on foreign donations to non-government organisations who participate in advocacy.

As a human rights lawyer, I am a frequent user of the freedom of information regime, and am familiar with the considerable challenges in that system.

- **Ability to engage broad and diverse community networks**

Through my work on democratic issues in Australia, I have developed, engaged and activated broad and diverse community networks from across environmental, consumer protection, community, union, philanthropic and faith-based sectors. We continue to work collaboratively on issues of shared concern, in particular around the ability of civil society to freely participate in public life. Our June 2017 report, [Defending Democracy](#), was supported by 15 of Australia's best known organisations from across the non-government sector.

- **Previous experience working with and influencing government**

A key aspect of my role is government-facing advocacy, which I do at Ministerial, private office and departmental level. I work closely with government in a range of areas, attending the DFAT and Attorney-General's Department's annual human rights fora. I work closely and collaboratively with DFAT on Australia's work at the United Nations.

Emily Howie

Director of Legal Advocacy

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