

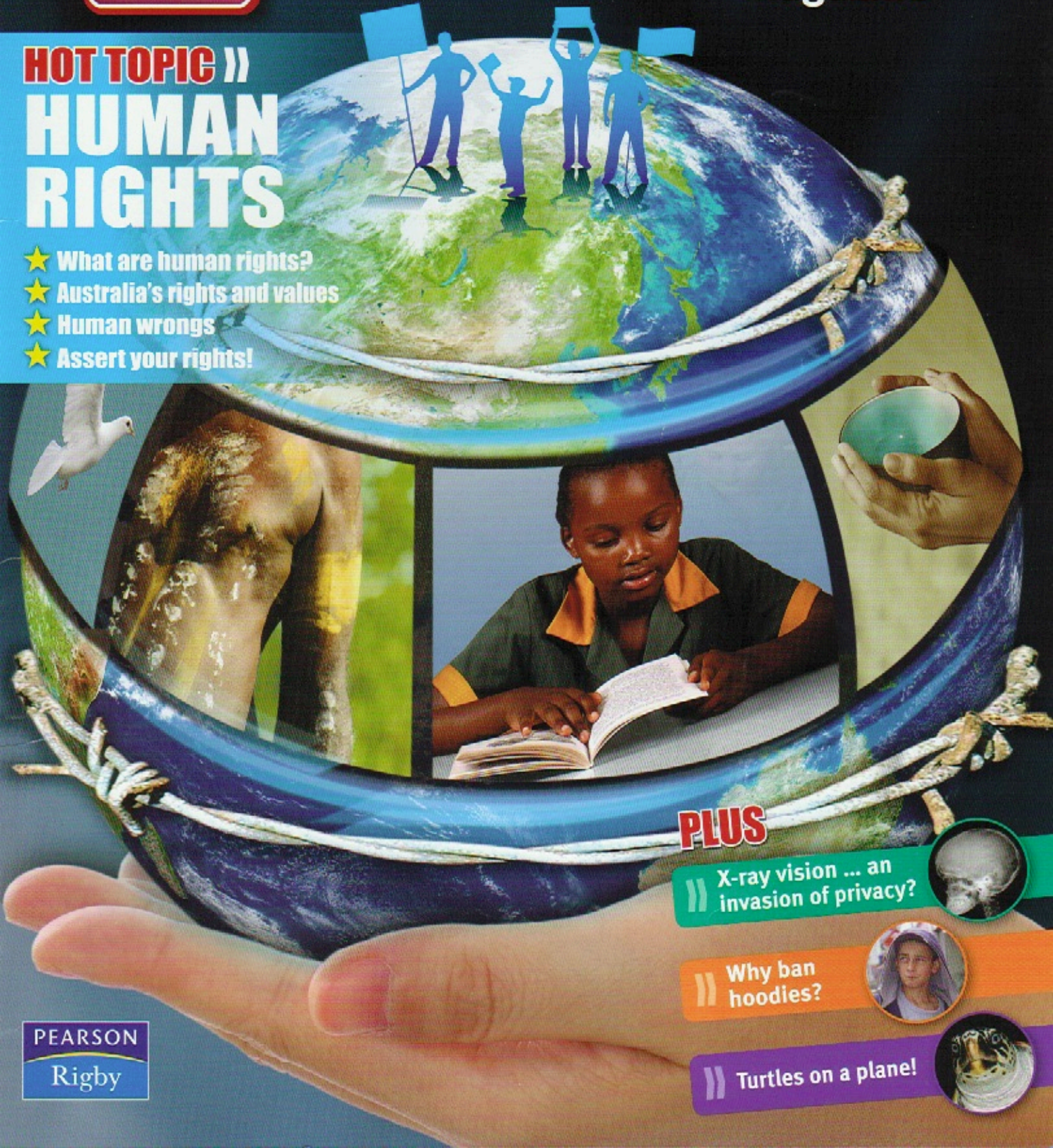
# behind the news

# Magazine


## HOT TOPIC »


# HUMAN RIGHTS


- ★ What are human rights?
- ★ Australia's rights and values
- ★ Human wrongs
- ★ Assert your rights!



### PLUS

» X-ray vision ... an invasion of privacy? 

» Why ban hoodies? 

» Turtles on a plane! 

# Human RIGHTS in Australia

Australian citizens come from many parts of the world, sharing common values and equal rights. **Marian McGuinness** explains how this works.

**B**eing an Australian citizen means you are a 'member' of Australia, either by birth or by choice. Australian citizenship was created on 26 January 1949 by a law called the *Nationality and Citizenship Act (1948)*. Before this, Australians were British subjects. It's because we are citizens that our government protects our rights.

## Australian human rights

Some countries, such as the USA, have a bill of rights—an official document that sets out the rights of all its citizens. The Australian **Constitution** doesn't include a bill of rights, but it does give us some rights, such as freedom of religion. Other rights are protected by different laws.



A citizenship ceremony

## THE FIVE FREEDOMS

These are five freedoms that all Australians enjoy.



**Association:** the freedom to join any lawful group



**Religion:** the freedom to follow any religion, or none



**Assembly:** the freedom to meet for legal, social or political purposes

**FREEDOM**



## Everyday rights

Human rights affect our everyday lives. Every child in Australia has the right to free government education. We all have the right to practise a religion of our choice in a place of worship such as a church, a mosque, a synagogue or a temple. And when you are old enough to work, you will be protected by the Australian Fair Pay Commission, which decides on the minimum wage that can be paid to workers.



**Movement:** the freedom to leave and return to Australia at any time



**Speech:** the freedom to speak or write about any topic

## How are our rights protected?

In Australia, our human rights are protected on many levels. Because we live in a **democracy**, all Australian citizens have the right to vote and elect our federal and state governments. These governments make laws that protect our rights.

The courts are where decisions are made about the law. The High Court deals with challenges to the Constitution and hears appeals from the state and territory courts. Supreme Courts and County Courts deal with different levels of offences. Under Australian law, everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty. If someone can't afford a lawyer, they can get help through legal aid.

The Australian Human Rights Commission, established in 1986, supports our right to be treated with equality and fairness, and helps anyone who is **discriminated** against.

Police forces in every state help to maintain peace and order in our community.



Voting is a right, no matter where you live.

## Vote note

- ✓ It is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 years or older to vote, but ...
- ✓ Prisoners spending more than three years in jail cannot vote.
- ✓ Women gained the right to vote in federal elections in 1902.

## Glossary

- constitution:** a set of rules that state how a country will be governed
- democracy:** a system that lets all citizens have a say in how the country is run
- discriminate:** treat someone unfairly based on their differences