



**Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health**

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## **Petition to Ban Dowry for Australian Indian residents**

### **Petition Summary & Background**

Wedding Day should be a happy day, but this is hardly a day to celebrate for many of the Indian women and their families when there are demands being made on them by the groom's family to spend money, cash, gold, gifts for his family; money on the elaborate wedding function. It often adds up to multiple times the parents' annual income. The problem is worsened when the young women are married off to Indian men living away from India for example in Australia.

India is celebrating in the glory of its global economic achievement but the decades old issue of "dowry related domestic violence, suicide and homicide" affecting its young women citizens- whether they live in India or in foreign lands continues to be a thorny issue for Indians everywhere.

#### **What is dowry?**

Dowry is a practice defined as giving gifts, cash, gold, household furniture, cars etc in the context of marriage for up to seven years after marriage. Dowry has been a part of Indian marriage ceremony for centuries. Dowry in ancient times was meant for the financial security of the bride. Dowry was the daughter's share of the family inheritance while the sons inherited the ancestral property and family wealth. The meaning of Dowry has changed over time.

#### **Evils of Practice of Dowry**

This practice has now evolved into a social evil and its meaning has changed over the past decades. Now it is compulsory for the bride's family to give extensive dowry. It is no longer voluntary. To stop the abuse India banned dowry in 1961 but the practice of making unashamed demands for dowry by the groom's parents has continued to rise. There

	<p>are constant reports of dowry deaths, domestic violence associated with criticisms of insufficient gifts and offerings according to the newspapers and Indian academic literature . Greed and demands for dowry is responsible for cruelty and torture against the brides and even death by murder or suicide . There is research evidence from Victoria that the practice of dowry in Australia is flourishing ( O'Connor et al 2013 ) and is a significant contributor towards domestic violence against Australian Indian women , depression and suicidal thinking.</p>
<p><b>Action Petitioned for</b></p>	<p>We the undersigned are concerned citizens who urge the Australian Government to address and act on the issue of dowry as a cause of domestic violence by legally banning dowry in line with the Indian laws, for Australian Indian residents planning to get married. or are already married. We are also lobbying to get dowry related crimes to be made punishable offences with severe criminal and civil penalties.</p> <p>We urge you to sign this petition so that we can fight this immoral and illegal Indian practice in Australia as well and so that these innocent women are not victimized.</p> <p>Please sign and send to either of the emails or fax numbers given on the signature sheet .</p>

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