



Media Release
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Protecting and promoting human rights in Victoria: the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) today welcomed the enactment of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

“This is an exciting and historic moment”, said Simeon Beckett, President of ALHR. “As the first Australian state to have a Charter of Rights, Victoria is leading the way. This will encourage other Australian states to follow suit.”

“There is clearly significant community support for this initiative,” said Beckett, noting that 84 per cent of submissions received by the Human Rights Consultation Committee favoured legislative measures to better protect human rights in Victoria.

“This underscores the desire of Victorians to live in a society that fosters respect, equality and justice.”

“Through the Charter, human rights will inform policy development, parliamentary drafting, and government programs. Laws must be interpreted by courts and tribunals consistently with the Charter, and courts will have the power to make declarations of incompatibility.”

“While some have been concerned about an increased role for the judiciary this has not been the experience elsewhere. The main impact of the Charter’s predecessor, the UK Human Rights Act, has been through fostering the protection of human rights in the work of government and to provide for an important yardstick against which to assess the actions of the executive.”

“The Victorian Government has been careful to maintain the supremacy of Parliament in human rights matters and we think this strikes a reasonable balance. Ultimate responsibility will remain with the parliament not the courts.”

“The Charter is also an important first step. Consistent with recommendations from ALHR and others, a review in four years will enable further consideration to be given to issues such as economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the possibility of constitutional entrenchment.”

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