

Features

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

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IT'S positive to see that the new abortion laws are being discussed and debated within a human rights context. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities protects a number of rights, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. However, no right is absolute and each human right in the charter may be limited.

The purpose of the charter is to provide a framework to help us balance competing rights and responsibilities. Freedom of conscience is not the only issue at stake here, and to suggest so is to simplify an extremely complex issue. In this case, a doctor's right to freedom of conscience needs to be balanced with competing considerations such as a patient's right to make a free and informed choice. Sometimes limits on human rights are necessary in a democratic society that respects the human dignity of each individual.

Helen Szoke

Chief Conciliator/CEO, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission