



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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[Hobart Mercury](#)

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English

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Time for a charter

I AM surprised by the Mercury's negative attitude to a charter of human rights (Editorial, March 14) when most of Australia's judiciary, our leading constitutional experts and civil libertarians agree a charter is an important and logical step in the maturing of our nation's legal and constitutional identity.

Australia is now the only common-law country in the world that does not acknowledge and defend its human rights charter by law. This means even though Australia has signed all five international treaties that make up the International Bill of Human Rights, none of these treaties are legally binding in this country.

Opinion polls consistently show an overwhelming majority of Australians support a charter of human rights and they believe a Bill of Rights would strengthen our national identity. The editorial suggests a bill of rights would prove to be a lawyers' picnic and that it could create a system where disgruntled citizens could use the legal system to impede on democratic and government practices. This is a very negative view of what a charter of human rights would mean for Australians.

On a most basic level, an Australian charter of human rights would increase public awareness and encourage a greater culture of respect in this country for the rights of all our citizens. It would also protect in law fundamental human rights and important Australian values, such as the right to freedom of thought and religion and the right to equality before the law.

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