

GENERAL

Basic services part of human rights, says Chaney

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The man entrusted to oversee the development of a WA human rights Bill has criticised Government agencies for neglecting the rights of people living in remote parts of the State by failing to deliver basic services.

Fred Chaney, who the State Government has appointed as chairman of the committee reviewing the plan, said yesterday that such a Bill was designed to force bureaucracy to be more responsive to human rights, particularly in addressing the inadequate service delivery in remote areas.

The Reconciliation Australia director said that during his committees consultation on the plan there had been general support in the metropolitan area for the draft Bill to be extended to include the protection of social, economic and cultural rights, particularly rights to housing, health services, education, food and water. Public consultation had also shown general support for the introduction of a WA human rights Act.

Attorney-General Jim McGinty has said previously his favoured model is one based on broader rights, such as the right to a fair trial, freedom of speech and the right to privacy, rather than specific social, cultural and economic rights.

Mr Chaney said feedback from his committees forums in the Kimberley had revealed there were "live human rights issues" facing the region.

Those consistently identified included insufficient resources, inability of service agencies to deliver, infrastructure gaps, issues related to the treatment of Aboriginal people and Perth's inability to comprehend conditions in the Kimberley.

Mr Chaney, a former Federal Aboriginal affairs minister, said the message from the Kimberley was that the human rights issue had become "intensely practical". But he said that human rights legislation was not just about underprivileged people.

"The farther you are from Perth, the clearer are the concerns that basic service delivery is fundamental to securing human rights, in other words you do need access to what Government provides if you are to enjoy your human rights," he said.