

Opinion

**OPINION**

16 June 2007

[Northern Territory News/Sunday Territorian](#)

Copyright 2007 News Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Bill of Rights a paper tiger

CALLS for a Bill of Rights for the Northern Territory are being heard more often.

Such a bill is a separate issue from statehood and the two should not be combined.

Nor should a Bill of Rights be an integral part of the constitution.

The fundamental purpose of such a bill is to protect the ordinary citizen from the state; that is, from the excessive use of power by politicians.

On the face of it, there are some excellent role-models to study; South Africa's and Papua New Guinea's come to mind. But there is one essential criterion on which both of those documents fall down, as do many others.

That criterion is whether the Bill of Rights can be suspended for any agreed reason, such as during a state of emergency.

This is just the time that the ordinary citizen needs all the legal protection from the state that he or she can get.

If it can be suspended, such a bill is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Col Friel, Alawa