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Debus in push for charter of rights

SIMON BENSON

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FORMER attorney-general Bob Debus has admitted the state's terrorism laws warrant the introduction of a charter of human rights.

Mr Debus, the minister in charge of drafting the laws, confessed to having private concerns about protection of human rights when he introduced the laws in 2005.

Having retired only three weeks ago, he is now leading a crusade to push the State Government to introduce a charter of human rights.

Former premier Bob Carr consistently objected to the need for such a charter.

His successor Morris Iemma is correspondingly lukewarm on the idea, which many wrongly believe would become a quasi Bill of Rights.

But Mr Debus said yesterday a charter of human rights was already in place in Victoria and was needed in NSW to guide Parliament when drafting legislation.

"I support terrorism laws. There is no doubt they were passed with community support," Mr Debus said.

"I passed a lot of it ... in particular the preventative detention aspects had to be passed at a state level. It was in that context that I began to realise we had ill-informed notions of what our basic rights are."

Mr Debus is now lobbying Mr Iemma from outside the Cabinet table to introduce a charter.

He said a charter of human rights would not be entrenched. Rather it would be a piece of legislation protecting basic civil and political rights.

It would include the right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, freedom from discrimination, rights to family life, rights to privacy, freedom from torture or arbitrary imprisonment or cruel or degrading treatment.