



Law reformers want human rights charter

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THE State Government should enact a charter of human rights, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute says.

The Institute released a report yesterday that made 23 recommendations, including:

- * Legislation to establish a charter of human rights.
- * The protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- * The establishment of an independent office of Tasmanian human rights commissioner.
- * A requirement that all public authorities and legislation adhere to a rights charter.
- * Provisions for people whose rights have been violated to take Supreme Court action.

Institute board member Terese Henning said the report was based on a record 407 submissions, which were overwhelmingly in favour of a charter.

She said it was time to properly codify protections for human rights, which were currently fragmented, incomplete and complex.

"Over 90 per cent of the submissions we received were strongly in favour of the enactment of a charter of human rights," she said.

Enacting a human rights charter would ensure that all government agencies acted with due respect for the rights of citizens, Ms Henning said.

Justice Minister Steve Kons welcomed the report and said he would examine its contents and prepare a briefing for Cabinet but made no promises on adopting any of the recommendations.

Opposition Leader Will Hodgman said a charter of human rights, or new layers of bureaucracy, would not necessarily bring about any improvements to the plight of vulnerable or disadvantaged people and that what was needed was strong policy and funding commitments.

Greens leader Peg Putt called on the Government to give an in-principle commitment to legislation along the lines of a private member's bill she had introduced in 2005.

Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group spokesman Rodney Croome said it was time for the Government to act.

"There are still some Tasmanian laws which discriminate against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and a charter would allow these issues to have their day in court," he said.