

## **Lift veil on secret human rights Act, says Omodei**

JESSICA STRUTT

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Attorney-General Jim McGinty should immediately release a report by a committee that investigated the State Governments controversial plans for a human rights Act and all the submissions it received to ensure an informed debate on the issue, the Opposition says.

Liberal leader Paul Omodei likened the secrecy surrounding the proposed human rights Act to the Governments attempts this month to keep a number of damning reports on indigenous affairs confidential. Those reports, by the Governments special adviser on indigenous affairs Lt-Gen. John Sanderson and WA Museum chief Dawn Casey, were released only after pressure from State Coroner Alastair Hope.

The Government-appointed committee, headed by former National Native Title Tribunal deputy president Fred Chaney, handed over its report more than a week ago but Mr McGinty refused yesterday to answer questions on whether The West Australian could get a copy and when it would be released.

Mr Omodei questioned how the community could have an informed debate on the issue when the Government was keeping key information secret.

In September, the committee rejected a formal request from The West Australian for access to the submissions of key public agencies, including police and government departments, leading the Opposition to question the lack of transparency in the process. A number of groups, including police, have subsequently chosen to release their submissions.

Mr Omodei said the Liberals FOI application for the submissions had also been rejected on the basis it was not in the public interest to release them.

"The Government has taken the line of we know what is best for the people but it is bedded in a mentality of secrecy and deceit," he said. "This is a process that has cost WA hundreds of thousands of dollars, on a topic that is of significant public interest and will affect each and every West Australian.

"Its not good enough for Jim McGinty and Alan Carpenter to keep everything secret."

Greens MP Giz Watson said she would assume the report would be made public before any human rights Bill was brought before State Parliament. "That's the process they followed in Victoria," she said.

She understood that Mr McGinty had to consider the report but hoped it was released early next year. "Personally I think that the process is just following its course and I dont have a sense that anybody's delaying anything or hiding anything so Id expect that we'd get a chance to look at it sometime in the new year," she said. The committee, appointed by Mr McGinty in May, received more than 300 public submissions.