



VICTORIA LEADS THE WAY ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Victoria is set to become the first state in Australia to introduce a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities that will simplify our laws and bring together our human rights in one piece of legislation.

The introduction of the charter will be supported by an allocation of funding in the 2006/07 Budget of \$6.5 million over four years.

The proposal for a charter follows overwhelming support from the Victorian community in response to consultations on human rights.

The 2006-07 Budget provides funding for:

- A community education program to be undertaken by the Equal Opportunity Commission
- Human rights training for key government agencies including Victoria Police, Corrections Victoria and the Department of Human Services
- A human rights unit that will analyse policy and legislation, co-ordinate training across government, and help departments and ministers to apply the charter
- Additional resources for the Equal Opportunity Commission to report on the workings of the charter
- Support for the Human Rights Law Resource Centre to assist their advocacy work in relation to disadvantaged Victorians

Victorian government departments will have to apply the charter, and future legislation will be developed with regard to the rights set out in the charter. Members of Parliament will need to make a statement to advise Parliament on whether new legislation meets the standard set by the charter.

The charter to be introduced in Victoria is based on models already working in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the ACT.

The charter is not like the US Bill of Rights. If legislation is considered inconsistent with the charter the Supreme Court can issue a Declaration of Inconsistent Interpretation for consideration by Parliament, but the Victorian courts will not be able to strike down laws or award damages.

The public sector will be bound by the charter from 1 January, 2008.