

Community Information Victoria Inc

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6 December 2011

Premier Ted Baillieu MLA
Premier of Victoria
Office of the Premier
1 Treasury Place
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email: ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au

To The Premier Ted Baillieu,

Support for the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Community Information Victoria (CIVic) is the peak body for the community information and support sector in Victoria. We provide operational support, sector development, representation and advocacy to our 64 member agencies. Our members are diverse and autonomous services who provide a range of services including emergency relief, financial counselling and microfinance to their local community, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and families. On behalf of our member agencies, we are writing in support of the Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Our members work with people for whom protections under the Charter offer a practical and effective tool against the on-size-fits all decision-making which do not give adequate regard to considerations of human rights. CIVic notes the personal and social benefits of Charter-based decision making by service providers in the community and public sectors, and the overall positive impact this has on vulnerable groups in Victoria. This is evidenced by the fact that 95% of submissions made to the Charter Review support retaining or strengthening the Charter – reflecting the highest level of support for a human rights instrument by any inquiry or poll in Australian history.

In advocating for the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, CIVic is strongly of the view that the enforcement role of courts and tribunals should be retained, to be further strengthened and made more accessible via forums such as the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This ensures access and reduces complexity in legal proceedings for non-compliance. Similarly, the inclusion of protections of economic and social rights in the Charter will create a fairer society and improve transparency, strengthen democracy and lead to improved decision-making, practices and processes for the vulnerable and disadvantaged within our Victorian communities.

I therefore urge you to consider not only retaining these aspects of the Charter, but to also take the leap in strengthening them to ensure that the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community can benefit from the human rights protections afforded by the Charter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Wheller", written in a cursive style.

Kate Wheller
Executive Officer