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ACCESS – if you need this newsletter hard copy, large font size or plain English, please let us know.

Editors' Letter

Much of this edition is focussed on the National Human Rights Consultation.

While all of us are very busy, and the thought of writing a "submission" can cause our eyes to glaze over, we need to understand the importance of this particular consultation.

In a nutshell, the Federal Government, are considering the idea of a national charter of rights. For Victorians, you would be familiar with the recent *Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006*. This could be a similar law – that is – one based on the protection of human rights, but covering Australia rather than just Victoria.

The opportunity to have input in to something such as this is rare. In this issue of the *Advocate*, we include information on the process, and also opportunities for you to put in submissions in the least time consuming way for those of you who are pressed for time.

Please do whatever you can.

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An update on our Lord Mayor Doyle's views on accessible tram stops. Upon receiving the DDLS view that perhaps his thoughts on people with disabilities and accessible tram stops could be reconsidered, Mr Doyle maintained his position.

Julie Philips
Manager

National Human Rights Consultation

On the 10 December 2008, the Federal Attorney General, the Hon Robert McClelland, launched the National Human Rights Consultation.

You may remember that earlier in 2008, a meeting called the '2020 Summit' was held, and among the many things talked about were human rights.

The government are interested in knowing what you think about human rights in Australia. Are there any gaps? Is there room for improvement in protecting the human rights of Australians?

A National Human Rights Consultation Committee has been established. The role of the Committee is to consult broadly with the community, including those who live in rural and regional areas, about the protection and promotion of human rights. They are undertaking a range of awareness raising activities so that as many people as possible can participate.

There are many ways you can contribute to these discussions.

1. You can make a submission on the website: www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au.
2. You can send a written submission to:
National Human Rights Consultation Secretariat
Attorney-General's Department
Central Office
Robert Garran Offices
National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600
3. You can register to attend a Community Roundtable session near you.
4. Organise your own Community Roundtable

The deadline for submissions is **15 June 2009**.

"Community Roundtables" are meetings which will be held throughout the state in different locations throughout metropolitan and rural Victoria. These can be found through the website mentioned above. Or, you can have your own 'Community Roundtable'.

Sound like too much work? The important thing is that your views are heard – it doesn't matter whether you are writing one page or 100 pages. Each separate submission is taken in to account and is valuable. There could be a number of different ways that government decides it can better protect human rights. The most important thing is that you tell government whether you think human rights are already adequately protected – or not.

If you have your own ideas what should be done – feel free to share, but you don't need to put forward a solution – you can just say what you think.

What does DDLS think?

We believe there are gaps when it comes to protecting the human rights of Australians. It was extremely encouraging for Victorians when the *Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006* came in to force, but unfortunately, it cannot be used on its own, which is a significant disadvantage.

Discrimination laws are used extensively (naturally) at DDLS, however it is clear to us that people with disabilities can get treated very badly, but it is not necessarily discriminatory.

We also think that something such as a Federal Bill of Rights or a Human Rights Act would strengthen disability laws and offer more protection against general human rights abuses.

Attached to this newsletter are two submission forms – one in plain English.

All you need to do is fill one of them out, and either send it back to us electronically or by fax, or send it straight to the committee. If you have any questions about what to do, please call us.

We strongly recommend that as many people as possible have their say!

DDLS Annual General Meetings

In recent years we have had our AGMs in the afternoon on a week day. We are wondering if our members have a preference for another time. If you have a view, please call Anna our Administration Officer and let her know.

Snapshot of the DDLS

Committee of Management

Jan Ashford (Chair)
Martin Leckey (Deputy Chair)
Bill James (Treasurer)
Robert Pask
John McKenna (Public Officer)
Cettina D'abaco
Jane Simmonds
Tim Greenall (Observer)
Julie Phillips (Secretary)

Staff

Manager

Julie Phillips

Principal Solicitor

Placido Belardo

Solicitor

Deborah Randa

Administrative Officer

Anna Leyden

Bookkeeper

Marie Collard

Volunteers

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Andrew Chen | Cassandra Lee |
| Abby Levy | Helen Drake |
| Mohsin Mughal | Natasha Koravos |
| Patricia Woo | Adam Jones |
| Yasmine Tian | |

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