



AUSTRALIAN
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ALHR Congratulates Qld Attorney General on Charter of Rights Inquiry

Leading Australian human rights lawyers' group, ALHR, today congratulated Qld Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath for taking a wise step in the rights direction by launching a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into a Human Rights Charter for Queensland. ALHR has been instrumental in the push for the inquiry since independent MP and Speaker Peter Wellington proposed it as part of his conditions for supporting Premier Palaszczuk's formation of a minority government in February 2015.

This morning, Benedict Coyne, ALHR Qld Convenor and Chair of the National Human Rights Act Sub-Committee, stated: "This is a very exciting time for Queenslanders who now have an excellent opportunity to have their voices heard on why we should insist upon normal legal protections for basic human rights as exist in most other parts of the western democratic world. Human rights form the basic building blocks of our way of life and so it makes sense that they are legally identified and protected. This will be an important step forward for Queensland."

Mr Coyne continued; "It is extremely encouraging that in the government statement announcing the Parliamentary Inquiry late last week, Attorney-General D'Ath stated that *'The protection of human rights is central to the Palaszczuk Government's values and it is an issue that many people in Queensland are passionate about and have advocated in favour of.'* The terms of reference for the inquiry look excellent because, among other things, they will focus on the operation and effectiveness of human rights legislation in Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and by ordinary statute internationally."

Experiences in other jurisdictions show that legislative Charters of Rights have very positive impacts on how government operates in its dealings with individuals and also broader educative effects in creating more tolerant, stable and respectful societies. In the Victorian experience, various case studies show that human rights legislation helped ensure: better accessibility on public transport; a more flexible approach to tax collection for disadvantaged families; better enforcement of the right to a fair hearing; ratepayers having opportunities to interact with local Councils; disadvantaged Victorians, from single mothers to the elderly and disabled, being saved from eviction.

"ALHR commends the Attorney-General and the Palaszczuk government on their commitment to listening to the people of Queensland who loudly called for this inquiry. Now it is time for the people of Queensland to follow through and tell their stories to the inquiry as to how the legal protection of basic human rights will meaningfully improve all of our lives in big and small ways" said Mr Coyne.

He concluded: "Hopefully, this will encourage other States and Territories such as Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales to also take up the task of ensuring that their constituents enjoy the proper protection of their basic human rights by law, as all human beings everywhere deserve."

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ALHR (Australian Lawyers for Human Rights) is a network of Australian lawyers active in practising and promoting awareness of international human rights standards in Australia. ALHR has a national membership of over 2,600 people, with active National, State and Territory committees.