Hon Edward O'Donohue MLC  
Chair- Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Sir  

Re: Review of Charter of human Rights  
I write this submission arising from my forty year interest and activity in this area of relationships in our society.

It was, and remains a great step forward in Australia for our State of Victoria to lead the way with the Charter of Human Rights we now have. It has been in existence and operation for long enough to establish that much of the criticism of its introduction was ill founded, as attested to also by experience in many other jurisdictions around the world. However, its continuance and reinforcement is important for the continuing process of grounding amongst us as Victorians of what may be described as a respect for a culture of Human Rights.

That there are still significant areas for this to take root is evidenced by the many instances of highly emotive debates in the community involving small and often unpopular minorities. I am still very clear about the way vilification and discrimination were present amongst us in Victoria during the first Gulf War and the continuing effect of this on school children of those days.

Today the stigma attached to people with severe mental illness stands as a clear area for improvement and inclusion in the Charter.

My continuing contacts with Koori people have convinced me that there is a great need for protection of their rights despite the fact that in Victoria there is a smaller problem than elsewhere in Australia.

Because of the undoubted power of certain media groups to generate what are quite often emotive campaigns against individuals and groups, it is vital for Parliamentarians to have to hand a ready compass to help them legislate wisely in such circumstances. With the test of compatibility with the Charter there is a clear basis for this endeavour.

Strengthening of the Charter through processes of periodic view  such as your Committee is undertaking can only help to hold up to us as citizens of the State a method of continuing leadership in this vital area of our life together.

Yours faithfully,  
Alex Kilgour  
Past Moderator of the Uniting Church(Victoria)