9th June 2011

Mr Edward O’Donohue MLC
Chairperson
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne Vic 3002

To Mr Edward O’Donohue MLC,

I wish to make a submission in regard to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights (the Charter). As a carer of two adolescent children with chronic illnesses, I greatly value the fact that Victoria has its own Charter of human rights because it means to me that our state cares for everyone — not just the fit and healthy or those of Anglo-Saxon heritage, but also those who are sick, disabled, indigenous or of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

It is reassuring to know that when I need to advocate on my children’s behalf, I have the Charter to draw upon when liaising with a public institution such as a hospital or school. It is a valuable tool to ensure that people’s rights are recognised and valued.

It is also extremely important that public institutions are required to consider civil and political rights when developing and implementing new policies. This is a significant step in the right direction to promote and fulfil people’s rights in a systemic fashion.

The Charter would be further strengthened by also including economic, social and cultural rights. Considering the fact that human rights are inalienable, a human rights act should not protect some rights, in this case, civil and political rights, whilst excluding economic, social and cultural rights. For instance, the Charter protects the right to life but does not protect the right to health.

An education campaign to improve the community’s awareness of the Charter would be extremely valuable. This would also promote the Government’s commitment to justice for all people in the community, not a select few.

By its very existence, the Charter provides Victoria with the opportunity to promote the awareness of human rights state-wide. This can only serve to benefit the community at large whilst also enhancing the protection of people’s rights.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerri-Ann Tipping