15 June 2011

Mr Edward O’Donohue MLC
Chairperson - Scrutiny of Acts and Regulation Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE  VIC  3002

Dear Mr O’Donohue

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Review of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Yarra Ranges is fully committed to the intent of the Charter and the principles of accountability, accessibility and transparency in government. We consider that as the third tier of government, the local government sector works effectively to facilitate real social justice and inclusion outcomes within our local communities.

We do have some concerns however, regarding the proposal for the Charter to include mandatory compliance reporting and the implementation of a regular auditing process. The local government sector is already subjected to a range or regular reporting and audit requirements through agencies such as the Auditor General, the Essential Services Commission and the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate. While we would be supportive of having very clear processes for the escalation of concerns of perceived breaches, we are concerned that yet another layer of auditing and reporting will add unnecessary additional administrative and financial burden on Councils and ratepayers, and be a further distraction from front line service delivery to our communities.

It is our contention that mandatory reporting can often inadvertently create a ‘tick the box’ compliance mentality rather than achieve meaningful cultural change, and work against the embedding of principles into systems, processes and everyday ways of working. Rather, Yarra Ranges supports the Victorian Local Governance Association’s contention that there is a need to provide both funding and practical support to local governments to support compliance with our legal obligations and leverage local action on human rights within our communities.

.../2
Yarra Ranges looks forward to the review and refinement of the Charter to further progress this important issue.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]
Rebecca McKenzie
Director, Corporate Services

Copy: Maree McPherson – VLGA
Cr Samantha Dunn, President VLGA