20 June 2011

Mr Edward O'Donohue, MLC
Chairperson
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr O'Donohue

RE: Submission to the Inquiry into the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

This submission acknowledges the contribution of the Charter in protecting the human rights of all Victorians and setting out the requirements for government, police, local councils and public authorities to uphold human rights when making policies, laws and delivering services.

The City of Greater Dandenong is home to over 156 nationalities and cultural diversity is a key feature of our municipality. Council is committed to responding to the needs of all our residents which is achieved through effective planning, partnerships and community engagement. The Charter provides a platform for cultural change that enables a more just, equitable and active society. The principles of the Charter support a development of the best practice/service model where human dignity and respect are paramount. The City of Greater Dandenong has taken a proactive role in promoting and educating staff about the Charter and its benefits in protecting the human rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people.

From a local government perspective, compliance with the charter requires the consistent adoption of non-discriminatory practices across Council policies, services, recruitment processes and laws. To date, the costs of compliance with the Charter do not appear to be onerous for Victorian local governments. However, one of the key terms of reference for the review is to consider the inclusion of mandatory regular auditing of public services to assess their compliance with the Charter.

Auditing the compliance of public services in line with the Human Rights Charter is likely to require additional resources. Local government would be seeking the Victorian Government to commit additional resources in order to conduct compliance audits with the Victorian Human Rights Charter.

We strongly support the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities because of its value to the community and its contribution in the development and improvement of policies, laws and service delivery.

If you require additional information please do not hesitate to contact Mr Brendan Carins on 9239 5387 or via email Brendan.Carins@cgd.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Lee Robson
Manager Community Engagement