

**MEDIA RELEASE—3 May 2006**

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# Liberty Welcomes Charter

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Liberty Victoria has welcomed the Government's introduction of legislation for a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Victoria is the first State to introduce legislation that ensures adherence to the international human rights treaties that Australia has promised to uphold.

Liberty's President, Brian Walters SC, said: "Liberty has long called for legislation to import these obligations into Australian law.

"This Charter is a great achievement for all Victorians, and opens a new door to better protection of human rights here."

He called on all Victorian MPs to support the legislation.

Mr Walters said that the Charter was an important acknowledgment that human rights are the due of every person.

"We all have a responsibility to respect those human rights in others as they have a responsibility to respect ours," he said.

Mr Walters said it was crucial that the proposed Charter was built on the democratic idea of dialogue, not only between parliament, government and the courts, but also between the people and the parliament and government.

"As a first step on the road to a human rights culture the Government's Charter treads very cautiously, with just a subset of the human rights acknowledged in the international human rights treaties that Australia has promised to adhere to.

"The vital task in the years to come is to make the Charter work, and to develop and extend it as the people, and politicians, become more familiar with the concepts it embodies: to give it teeth, and to embrace all human rights."

*Liberty Victoria—The Victorian Council for Civil Liberties Inc—is an independent non-government organization which traces its history back to the first Australian civil liberties body established in Melbourne in 1936. Liberty is committed to the defence and extension of human rights and civil liberties. It seeks to promote Australia's compliance with the rights and freedoms recognised by international law.*

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