

Media release

Wednesday, 1 March 2009.

Charter report shows progress in youth participation but more work needs to be done

Victoria's peak body in youth affairs, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) calls on the State Government to work harder to ensure young people's rights to participate are realised. The rights of children and young people to participate are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory.

Released yesterday, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission 2008 report on the implementation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities includes an analysis of how Victoria is faring in the protection of young people's rights to participate. YACVic welcomes this focus within the report.

"YACVic commends the Victorian Government for the transparency they have shown in the implementation of the Charter. The focus by the Commission on children and young people's participatory rights illustrate ways in which we can further promote the rights of all young Victorians," said Georgie Ferrari, CEO YACVic.

"YACVic believes that the findings of the report further strengthen the case for the inclusion of young people's participatory rights, as recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, within the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities," said Ms Ferrari.

"Although the report tells us we are making significant progress as a State in improving human rights for Victorians under the Charter, much more could be done by the State Government to meaningfully engage with young people and support their participation" said Ms Ferrari.

Results of a survey of State and Local Government agencies conducted by the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission included in the report found that overall, the Local Government sector had more success than the State Government in promoting youth participation.

"Hearing the voices of young people, including them in democratic processes of community engagement and consultation and ensuring that they are considered stakeholders in the broad array of policy issues that impact on their lives are all ways that young people's rights to participate can be strengthened and will result in more resilient young people and stronger, healthier communities" said Ms Ferrari.

The report recognises the critical importance of positive State Government initiatives seeking young people's participation such as *Young People Direct*, and considers the potential positive outcomes of integrating elements of the Convention of the rights of the Child into the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

"The Youth Affairs Council strongly supports the inclusion of children and young people's rights into the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities." Ms Ferrari said. "The Charter would be strengthened by the acknowledgement of these specific rights and children and young people's rights would be better protected as a result."

End

For comments, please contact Georgie Ferrari, CEO YACVic, on 0411 484 428.