



HON WILL HODGMAN MP
LIBERAL LEADER

8 March 2014

Mr Benedict Bartl
Policy Officer
Community Legal Centres Tasmania
166 Macquarie Street
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Via Email:- ben_bartl@clc.net.au

Dear Mr Bartl

Thank you for your letter to Shadow Attorney-General, Dr Vanessa Goodwin MLC, received on 5 March 2014, seeking responses from the Liberals on a range of issues of interest to your members.

I have pleasure in responding on behalf of all Liberal Members and Candidates.

A Charter of Human Rights

The Liberals does not support the introduction of a Charter of Human Rights for Tasmania.

As you know, the Labor-Green Government spent tens of thousands of dollars pursuing this in 2010, before publicly stating in February 2012 that Tasmania could not afford a Charter of Human Rights, and that it could add another \$1 million to Departmental costs on top of the over \$1 million spent each year on Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Commission.

To be frank, the State Budget is more of a mess now than in was in 2012. If the State could not afford a Charter of Rights then, it certainly cannot do so now. Further, with almost 19,000 in our unemployment queues, a Charter of Rights will not create a single new job except for lawyers.

The Liberals strongly support improved human rights, however we do not believe it is necessary to create a new layer of bureaucracy, and hand power to unelected judges, to achieve that. Instead, the Liberals will be investing in rebuilding our essential services, and strengthening our community sector, in a new approach to provide a hand-up to vulnerable Tasmanians, and in a joined-up support system that we hope will see fewer disadvantaged Tasmanians fall through the gaps.

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Youth Justice

While the Liberals cannot commit to implementing the recommendations of the DHHS 'Continuum of Care' review because we have not seen those recommendations, we have announced a significant \$5.3 million investment into community youth justice over the next three years.

This funding will go to several programs including –

- **\$600,000 per annum to Save the Children's Supporting Young People on Bail program, and Post-Detention Transition program**, with both programs to be delivered state-wide. The bail program won a 2013 National Crime and Violence Prevention Award from the Australian Institute of Criminology. Save the Children will also contribute \$250,000 per annum;
- **\$270,000 per annum to extend the TOOL program**, to assist over 300 young people each year to return to school, or access employment or traineeships, in industries like construction, horticulture and hospitality;
- **\$500,000 per annum for Mission Australia's U-turn program**, a restorative justice program that has proven results in reducing reoffending and benefiting the community, with cars restored donated back to victims of crime or the community;
- **\$100,000 per annum for Whitelion in a Youth Employment Partnership**, to help up to 200 at risk young people to become job ready and find long-term employment. Whitelion are contributing an additional \$20,000 a year;
- **\$250,000 per annum for Tasmania's PCYC Network** to improve relationships between Police and young people and help divert young people from anti-social or criminal behaviour; and
- **\$50,000 per annum for JLD Restorative Practices** to deliver restorative practice training to teachers and staff in primary and secondary schools, to reduce problem behaviours and suspension rates.

We believe this investment into youth justice will deliver major advantages for our young people, with early intervention and help to get lives back on track, for our community with less crime, and for our economy with more skilled and productive young people. It will also reduce the number of people in detention, by giving magistrates more options.

Access to Justice – Environmental Defenders Office and Legal Assistance Services – and Solicitor’s Guarantee Fund

Within the current budget constraints, it will be difficult to commit to funding for the legal services you mention. We will work with the Australian Government, who I understand are currently undertaking a review of legal assistance services, to ensure that vulnerable Tasmanians have access to justice.

The Liberals support the use of any surplus funding in the Solicitor’s Guarantee Funding to be provided in grant funding to provide legal services that benefit vulnerable Tasmanians including family violence prevention legal services, women’s legal services, Aboriginal legal services and community legal services.

Procedural fairness for Housing Tasmania tenants

It is ironic that the Labor-Green Government – both who say they support a charter of human rights for Tasmania – may be in breach of international human rights conventions for evicting a public housing tenant, a young single mother, without providing a reason for doing so.

If elected, the Liberals will put in place a Code of Conduct for public housing tenants to reduce serious anti-social behaviour and aggression in our communities and neighbourhoods by implementing a three-strike warning system.

The Code of Conduct, to be developed closely with all stakeholders, will not only give tenants a clear understanding of the behaviours that are unacceptable and the consequences for breaching that Code, but provide clear and transparent information to all parties about processes and procedures to be applied in the event of a breach. Those processes will include clear avenues for right of review or appeal.

In tandem, the Liberals will also be developing a reward scheme to provide due recognition to the overwhelming majority of residents in public housing who care for their properties are model tenants.

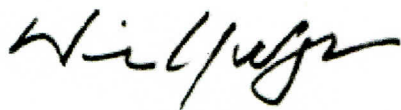
Family Violence

The laws were introduced ten years ago, and the Liberals will commit to a review as scheduled, to ensure the laws are working as intended. Further, as part of that review, we are committed to a wider systemic review of family violence related homicides in Tasmania, to identify points of intervention and common warning signs, as proposed and supported by Police and family violence support services at a domestic violence roundtable in 2012.

The Liberals have also committed to restoring police numbers, and this will help ensure the specialist family violence police units cut in 2011 by the Labor-Green Government, could be restored, in consultation with the Police Commissioner.

The Liberals will also fund a \$250,000 State Policy for Affordable Housing, and as part of the development of that Policy, we'll be looking at the current and unmet demand for crisis shelters for women, and children, escaping family violence.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Hodgman', written in a cursive style.

Will Hodgman MP
Liberal Leader