



**Equal Opportunity
Tasmania**

Equal Opportunity Tasmania

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TALKING POINT

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Why should we care about human rights and discrimination at election time?

Cost of living, health, housing, education, the environment and, dare I say, football stadiums are the issues at the forefront of everyone's mind with the election campaign underway.

However, there has been almost complete silence on human rights and discrimination. Ironically, discrimination and sexual harassment thrives in silence.

Most people seem to think that human rights and discrimination are only things to worry about when we have 'fixed' the things that really matter. That somehow human rights and discrimination exist in a vacuum and are disconnected from the realities of everyday life, and we should only look at them when we have the leisure to do so, or when a person experiences discriminatory behaviour they may turn their minds to it.

Let's say:

- An employee feels they have to leave their job because of sexual comments they face at work, impacting their ability to pay the rent and buy groceries for their family.
- A student disengages at school because of the racist graffiti they see in the toilets, impacting on the quality of their education.
- People with disability are stuck on waiting lists for housing because there are not enough accessible houses.
- Regional communities face the prospect of not having a local doctor and can't access mental health services.

These are all real issues affecting people on a daily basis in Tasmania. They are also human rights or discrimination issues.

I am calling on all candidates in this election to commit to undertaking a substantive review of Tasmania's *Anti-Discrimination Act*. While once considered a 'gold

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standard' piece of legislation, it has now fallen behind other states and territories. Tasmanians need greater protections in these times – for employers to have positive duties to prevent sexual harassment and discrimination, to make sure people who experience domestic violence have rights under discrimination law, and for people who rely on assistance animals to have clear protection.

Tasmania is also trailing behind other states and territories in implementing human rights legislation. Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory all have Human Rights Acts that have been working effectively for years.

I am calling on all candidates in this election to support the introduction of a Human Rights Act in Tasmania. A Human Rights Act will require parliament when passing laws, courts when interpreting laws, and public authorities (like government departments) in providing services, to consider rights such as the rights to adequate housing, education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and to a safe and healthy environment.

Human rights and discrimination are inextricably linked with the biggest issues facing Tasmanians today. This is why I care about human rights and discrimination; this is why every Tasmanian deserves the best *Anti-Discrimination Act* and a Human Rights Act; this is why all candidates in the election should care; and why you should care when considering who you want to represent you in the Parliament.

For direct enquiries:

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