

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: FRIDAY 11 JUNE 2010

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Community input sought on options for racial vilification laws

A paper released today by the Tasmania Law Reform Institute is seeking feedback on options for Tasmania to address racial vilification.

Tasmania Law Reform Institute Director Professor Kate Warner said today the Institute had undertaken the issues paper at the request of UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Daryl Le Grew.

“Prof Le Grew asked the Institute to examine the capacity of Tasmanian laws to address racial vilification and racially motivated offences after an apparent increase in the number of attacks on immigrants and international students in Australia,” Prof Warner said.

“The key concern of the paper is whether Tasmania should introduce criminal racial vilification provisions and if so, whether these should be located in the *Criminal Code* or alongside the civil racial vilification provisions in the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)*.”

Prof Warner said the issues paper also asks whether Tasmania should introduce a sentence enhancement provision which would expressly allow the court to consider racial hatred or prejudice of the offender as an aggravating factor at sentencing.

Racial vilification is generally used to refer to offensive and abusive comments or acts which either express, demonstrate or incite hatred and contempt for individuals on the grounds of their race or ethnicity, she said.

“Provisions relating to racially motivated offences cover situations where the offender is motivated by hatred or prejudice towards members of particular a racial group,” Prof Warner said.

“All Australian states, apart from Tasmania, have some legislative form of criminal racial vilification or sentence enhancement provision.

The Issues Paper, *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences*, asks for community feedback on incidents of racial vilification and racially motivated offences. It also asks the public to consider the various law reform options available and indicate which they think would operate most effectively in Tasmania.

Any group or person is invited to respond to this issues paper. Following consideration of all responses it is intended that a final report containing recommendations to the Attorney-General will be published.

The Institute invites responses to the Issues Paper by 16 July 2010

The full report can be downloaded from www.law.utas.edu.au/reform/

Media Opportunity:

Who: Professor Kate Warner, Director, Tasmania Law Reform Institute and Ms Esther Newitt, Research Officer, Tasmania Law Reform Institute will be available for interview **TODAY at 10 am**

Where: Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, Faculty of Law, UTAS Sandy Bay campus corner of Grosvenor Crescent and Alexander Street.

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