

13 August 2015

Mr. Michael Brett Young  
Reviewer  
Charter Review Secretariat  
Level 24, 121 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne, VIC, 3000

Dear Mr Brett Young,

### **The opportunity and importance of education for an effective Victorian Charter of Human Rights**

[Eastern Community Legal Centre \(ECLC\)](#) is located in the Eastern region of Melbourne and serves the Cities of Whitehorse, Boroondara, Manningham, Maroondah, Knox and the Shire of Yarra Ranges. ECLC offers free legal advice from its offices in Box Hill, Boronia and Healesville during the day, at night and also through various outreach locations across the East, with a priority being given to communities experiencing disadvantage. Having operated for over 40 years, ECLC is one of Australia's most established community legal centres with many volunteers, partnerships and programs. In addition to direct legal services, ECLC focuses on community development and education activities that empower clients, workers and the general community. It raises awareness of its service, new legal developments and human rights through various projects.

ECLC has been a strong and active supporter of human rights for many years and particularly the Victorian Charter since its inception. However, with the Charter Review, ECLC chose to formally engage only with our partners and colleagues through the Federation of Community Legal Centres' submission.

However, in light of the broad and extraordinary public and media attention in recent weeks regarding racism and sport, particularly through the controversy surrounding Adam Goodes, the AFL and the wider community, the Centre felt compelled to formally draw your attention to its extensive work in this area and the immense opportunities to use sport and the concept of Fair Play to educate children, young people and indeed the whole community about human rights.

Given the timing of this correspondence, it will be deliberately brief and refer to the Centre's extensive earlier work (attached or through [weblinks](#)).

### **Background**

In 2007, with limited financial support (\$5,000) from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's Community Grants Program, ECLC engaged a professional drama group, Carp Productions, to develop, write and present a short performance to young people aged 9-14 years promoting awareness of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The performance piece was developed and initially performed at eight community festivals within the Eastern region during 2008, including the Knox and Maroondah Festivals in the outer-east of Melbourne. Through the story of an Aussie Rules loving fairy named FRED (Freedom, Respect, Equality & Dignity), the show, [Fred's Fair Play!](#) uses the metaphor of sport to engage primary aged children in a discussion about human rights principles. Video of [Fred's Fair Play](#) is still available online.

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Following the play's success, over the next four years the human rights education work expanded significantly through an extensive series of projects, extensive partnerships and with various funding sources, including a significant one-off grant from the Victorian government in 2010 and then support through the Commonwealth's Australian Human Rights Education Grants through 2010-2012, including an expansion into WA and NT.

The overall program was operated by ECLC as [Human Rights are Aussie Rules](#) or (HRAR), using multi-faceted interactive education approaches. Through a four year-period, it was utilised extensively and successfully in schools and other settings to educate thousands of children and young people, not to mention countless teachers, principals and parents.

Unfortunately, the project funding was largely exhausted and in mid-2013 the Centre was forced to significantly wind-back the staffing and hence delivery of the program. However, some elements of the program continue and the resources remain available for the program to be renewed and expanded – through a range of models.

Through the Commonwealth grant, ECLC expanded Human Rights are Aussie Rules through partnerships with Community Legal Centres in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. While both were effective, the [WA initiative](#) was highly successful, expanded with local funding and support and continues to operate and be very active.

## **The program**

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Over its development, HRAR developed five key tools for educating children about human rights, all of which rely on the four key FRED principles: Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity. These were selected and adapted accordingly for the local context:

1. A 45-minute theatre production, Fred's Fair Play;
2. A 60-minute interactive Human Rights are Aussie Rules workshop using game theory to explore FRED principles;
3. A Classroom Kit for students and teachers to incorporate into daily curriculum;
4. A mass participatory game, Handball for Human Rights; and
5. Three online computer games, commencing with [Handball for Human Rights](#).

The teaching model, workshop and materials were developed by a qualified teacher who consults for the Curriculum Corporation and is aligned directly to Victorian Education Learning Standards. Much more detail on these approaches is available on request.

## **Fred games**

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In 2015, ECLC finalised the development of two online computer games. Research and consultation indicated that the sporting metaphor was not always as effective in this context so a broader approach was utilised, while remaining focused on the Fred Principles. Both the new games are now online and available at [www.fredgames.org](http://www.fredgames.org):

- **Costume Clash:** educating children through gameplay about Freedom
- **Vision:** educating children through gameplay about Dignity

Each is provided with associated teacher resources to utilise the games in the classroom. Further human rights-focused games are also available through this website and it is hoped that this will be further developed into a broad clearinghouse for digital human rights education resources. Research established that no similar clearinghouse resource was available, particularly in Australia.

## **Beyond children into the community**

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One clear lesson from the HRAR work was that the metaphor of sport and human rights had wide engagement and extraordinary community connection. If this was not already clear, the recent furore and 'debate' regarding Australian of the Year Adam Goodes and continuing public racism has emphasised this again.

For ECLC, this reiterated that the conversation regarding human rights must constantly and actively be moved outside the legal fraternity and public authorities and a narrow legal understanding of rights

into the widest possible community discussion. Of course this is broader than sport, but sport is a phenomenally powerful tool to reach a wide proportion of the Victorian community.

ECLC contends that what limited education has been provided about Human Rights and the Charter has very rarely been focused on the broad community. While this may be largely due to a lack of resources, any Charter that is unknown nor understood by the community, particularly by those that need it most, is without the necessary import it requires.

In ECLC's earlier submission to the Victorian Inquiry into the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in 2011, it conducted research and made a series of observations and recommendations including:

1. The enactment of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities has resulted in improvements in service provision for vulnerable Victorians, but there is more work to be done.
2. That Human Rights education be incorporated into State primary and secondary school curriculum, in consultation with the Victorian Human Rights Education Committee.
3. That increased, recurrent funding for human rights education be made available to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and to community sector organisations.

ECLC submits that those recommendations remain at least as relevant now for this Charter Review.

ECLC has also made submissions to a number of reviews and inquiries using these approaches including:

1. [Australian Human Rights Commission National Anti-Racism Partnership & Strategy](#) (2012) (ECLC's HRAR was then named a best practice education model.)
2. [Inquiry into the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities \(2011\)](#)
3. [National Human Rights Consultation \(2009\)](#)

### **The language of sport and human rights**

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ECLC and its partners have shown that we can teach children, young people and their families about complex human rights principles – Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity – in accessible language everyone can understand.

That language is sport and fair play – a code that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries yet is uniquely Australian. The teaching approach model is best summed up by the slogan:

**“The right to wear your team scarf is no different to the right to wear a headscarf”**

Obviously a range of education and other approaches are needed to make the vision of Victoria as a community where human rights are always respected and upheld a reality. ECLC stands ready to assist and support this work wherever we can make a positive contribution.

Yours sincerely,



**Michael Smith**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

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