

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Output 1.3**

**Question No. 59**

**Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 18 February 2008:**

- a) What is the time frame for the process of community consultation concerning a possible national bill of rights?
- b) Indicate which categories of persons whom the community consultation is expected to consult?
- c) How widely will the community consultation take place around both city and regional Australia?
- d) Have any decisions been made to retain consultants and, if so, specify who they are.
- e) Do we have a clear position from the Attorney as to his support for a bill of rights and the nature and extent of that bill of rights?
- f) Please confirm if any decision has been made in a cabinet to progress this matter?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

- a) A decision has not been made about the timeframe for the national human rights consultation.
- b) The Government has indicated that recognition and protection of human rights and responsibilities is a question of national importance for all Australians. Australia-wide consultation will be undertaken, with the aim of achieving the broadest possible participation by the Australian public, to determine how to recognise and protect human rights and responsibilities.
- c) See answer to b).
- d) No.
- e) The Government has indicated that, while it would not support inclusion of a bill of rights in the *Constitution*, the consultation will consider a range of options for recognising and protecting human rights in Australia and will not presuppose any outcome. A legislative charter of rights and responsibilities is one option, but any new approach will flow from the views expressed by the Australian people.
- f) The Attorney-General has advised that as the Cabinet's deliberations are confidential, except to the extent announced by the government, the Department should neither confirm nor deny whether a particular matter has been considered by the Cabinet.