

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Last Chance to Comment on Circumcision

The Tasmanian Law Reform Institute at UTAS has encouraged the Tasmanian community to contribute to the largest review into the legalities of male circumcision in Australia's history, before final submissions close on 28 August.

The issues paper, *Non-Therapeutic Male Circumcision*, requested by the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children, has identified serious uncertainty about whether circumcision can be lawfully performed on an infant male.

TLRI Postgraduate student and Issues Paper author, Warwick Marshall, said the research has found that the criminal and civil laws fail to provide adequate certainty for both parents and members of the medical profession.

"The crux of the uncertainty is whether the consent of the parent of the child being circumcised provides the circumciser with protection from criminal and civil actions which may be brought against them for performing a circumcision," Mr Marshall said.

Mr Marshall said the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children, Paul Mason, requested the Institute review the issues relating to the circumcision of males under the age of majority, with doctors wanting clarity on their legal position.

He said the Commissioner had concerns that some procedures, when performed without medical indication and without the competent consent of the child, may traverse the rights of children.

"Reform to clarify the uncertainty in the existing law might also present an opportunity to set or clarify the standards that those who perform circumcision have to meet in Tasmania," he said.

Mr Marshall said the paper neither supported or opposed circumcision, but aimed to stimulate public debate on an appropriate legal framework for the practice.

"We encourage people to voice their opinions on the issues raised in the issues paper and to tell their own stories about their personal experiences with circumcision to the Law Reform Institute," he said.

Public feedback closes on 28 August, and will be incorporated into a detailed final report which will be presented to the Attorney-General for review.

For more information contact Tasmania Law Reform Institute, Warwick Marshall, on (03) 6226 2068.

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

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