

Wednesday, 26 November 2008

CHRISTMAS SCROOGES STOP FOOD DONATIONS

Attorney-General Michael Atkinson says he's appalled that the Opposition has stalled a Bill that, if passed, would see a rise in food donations to the State's most needy at this tough economic time.

"This is a heartless action, coming at a time when disadvantaged and homeless people most need a helping hand.

"Christmas is near and the world financial crisis is making life hard for some South Australians. Food donations are needed now. These laws are needed now," Mr Atkinson said.

"The season of goodwill towards others is upon us, yet the Opposition is more concerned with their own interests than those of disadvantaged families and homeless people in South Australia," he said.

Today the Legislative Council made amendments to the *Civil Liability (Food Donors and Distributors) Amendment Bill 2008*, which will delay the introduction of the laws until next year or possibly longer.

The Bill is designed to protect a food donor from liability, unless it knew the food it donated was unsafe or it was reckless about this.

The Opposition parties want to broaden this simple Bill to include all donations, not just food.

"The Liberals amendments complicate the Bill and necessitate a new round of public consultation, which could take months. All the Liberals have achieved by this foolish move is to deny vital food donations to the State's most needy at this tough economic time," Mr Atkinson said.

The Rann Government has consulted with charities, the restaurant and catering industry and MPs about this Bill during the past six years. Concessions have been made including a review of the laws after two years and a promise to consider the inclusion of non-food items in future legislation.

"I have also assured the Parliament that, if the Bill is passed unamended, I will publish a report by October next year exploring protections for the donation of goods, services and access to premises. Thorough public consultation and much more work is needed to properly determine whether such ideas are workable and beneficial," Mr Atkinson said.

"Each night about 840 people sleep rough on South Australian streets and many more families are living on the breadline.

"The Opposition has let down these people and prevented generous and charitable businesses from offering the support they are keen to provide."