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Bias commission to study hatred claim

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NICK CLARK

December 11, 2007 12:00am

THE Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner will investigate a complaint that a Liberal Party federal election pamphlet incited hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation.

One of the complainants, Martine Delaney, welcomed the decision, saying that vilification of minorities had no place in Australian elections.

"The purpose of the Liberal pamphlet was not to promote policy debate but to foster fear, ignorance and hatred," Ms Delaney said. "With the right of free speech comes a responsibility not to abuse that right by inflaming prejudice."

She said the pamphlet had declared same-sex marriage and intersex rights as extreme and harmful and associated them with the skull and crossbones -- a symbol she says is universally associated with poison and death.

Last year Ms Delaney complained to the commission about a Liberal pamphlet distributed during the 2006 state election campaign which condemned same-sex marriage.

Print advertisements, authorised by the Exclusive Brethren religious group, which condemned transgender and intersex rights, are presently before the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Tribunal.

In the course of its investigation the commission discovered that the cost of the advertisements had been invoiced to the Liberal Party.

A commission spokeswoman confirmed an investigation of the 2007 campaign pamphlet was being made.

Investigations are normally concluded within six months.

Liberal Party state director Damian Mantach said that the 2007 brochure was the 2006 brochure with some of the wording taken out.

However, he said the skull and crossbones had been added to the 2007 publication.

"I think it is frivolous bringing these type of cases," he said.

"The Liberal Party stands by the brochure and its contents."

The commission spokeswoman said a complaint had also been received against a Timber Communities Australia television advertisement about same-sex marriage.

In the NSW seat of Lindsay, members of the Liberal Party distributed a pamphlet from a fake Islamic group saying the ALP supported the Bali bombers and the building of a mosque in western Sydney.

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