

Inquiry: Exposure Draft of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012.

A submission by the Rev'd Lance Lawton

I call on senators to recognise the history of legislation of this kind in recent Australian history, not least the Victorian case involving 'Catch the Fires' Danny Nahlia and Daniel Scot. The case dragged on for several years at great expense to the civil appeals system. It demonstrated among other things, the ease with which one religious or other interest group can gain advantage over another simply by declaring themselves offended.

I submit that legislation which defines discrimination to include behaviour that "offends or insults" can only herald more of the same, to no one's real benefit, but more importantly to the detriment of democratic freedoms of speech, religion and association.

Such legislation is based on an irrational and illogical premise that one party's expression of disagreement with the ideas, beliefs or actions of another *ipso facto* constitutes fear, hatred or discrimination. It also assumes that legislation is capable of protecting people's sensibilities without undermining the checks and balances required for the maintenance of democratic freedoms for all.

I urge the Parliament to reject any legislation of this kind, which has proven itself so susceptible to manipulation as to be detrimental to good social order.