

Hello,

I am writing to express my concern about this Bill which seeks to consolidate the existing Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation – the *Age Discrimination Act 2004*, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* – into a single Act.

The information about the inquiry on the House of Representatives website asserts that '... The Bill does not propose significant changes to existing laws or protections but is intended to simplify and clarify the existing anti-discrimination legislative framework.' My understanding is that this may not be correct.

I am led to believe that proposed changes to legislation may, in fact, erode my right to free speech in their attempt to prevent 'the causing of offence'. This worries me. It is not difficult to imagine situations where folk could 'take offence' as a means of muzzling opposition opinion. As I understand it, none of Australia's international treaty obligations require us to protect any person or group from being offended. We are, however, obliged to protect freedom of speech.

I cannot support any changes which would protect against causing offence at the expense of my right to free speech.

Regards, John.