

**To:** Clerks Office (SEN)

**Subject:** Submission to SO-50 revision

Dear Mr Pye,

It was with considerable concern that I took the trouble to retrieve and read Senate Standing Order 50 (SO-50). Reference to religion has no place in contemporary political practice. Its *compulsory* reference in Senate procedures is egregious indeed. I raise the following four points:

1. ABS data shows that one in three Australians is now non-faith, and the proportion is steadily increasing.
2. The current prayer of SO-50 fails the 'separation of church and state' test and is offensive to not only those Australians who are non-faith, but those of non-Christian faith, and more directly to current and future Senators of non-faith and other faiths.
3. Compulsorily requiring religious observance would be an OFFENCE in any other area of Australian public service. It equally has no place in the legislature.
4. There is no empirical scientific evidence that religion (or mandatory calls to 'reflection') result in more evidence-based, more respectful or more honest behaviour of those forced to so reflect or pray. Current politician practice confirms it. Prayer of clergy who hid institutional child sex abuse confirms it. Peer-reviewed scientific studies confirm it.

Is summary, the first part of SO-50 offends the doctrine of separation AND is of no practical effect. At best it is a waste of time and at worst offensive and hypocritical.

**Recommendation**

That all the words between "The President, on taking the chair each day, shall..." and "...make an acknowledgement of country..." be DELETED.

Yours sincerely

Neil Francis



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