

Dear Senators,

I was shocked that the Federal Attorney-General has proposed this controversial bill which would severely restrict our fundamental human rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and put us on a par with restrictive communist and Islamist regimes. I agree totally with former NSW chief justice, Jim Spigelman, who stated that it would impose unprecedented restrictions on free speech, far beyond anti-discrimination laws in other countries. Furthermore, reversing the onus of proof and then denying the right to have a legal adviser at conciliation conferences is contrary to natural justice.

I would remind you that a similar law in Victoria recently caused unjustified stress and expense for two Christian pastors before they were vindicated by the Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal five years later. Some other states then decided not to proceed with such harmful and counter-productive laws.

I also point out that people vary in what they regard as offensive, and this proposed law would lead to trivial and vexatious court cases. Such a law would also lead to suppression of the truth, as political correctness already does. In the Victorian case, all the statements which were regarded as offensive were acknowledged as truthful but truth was treated as irrelevant. Any law which leads to the suppression of truth is unjust and oppressive and very deleterious to society.

It is shocking that the Federal Attorney-General, whose fundamental role should be to uphold justice which is based on truth, even considers introducing such a bill. This bill is totally inconsistent with the values and standards of behaviour of Australian society which is so highly regarded by much of the world. Our existing anti-discrimination laws are perfectly adequate, and this proposed bill should be rejected.

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