

Senate Committee considering Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012.

Dear committee members,

I write to express my concern at the proposal to curb freedom of speech in this country. While the vast majority of us would want our discourse to be courteous and respectful of the feelings of others, under the proposed legislation we will be faced with the prospect that those with more deeply held or extreme political or religious views might claim to be offended if contrary views are aired. This will have the effect of muting the majority of reasonable citizens and giving the forum over to those with more passionate beliefs, as such people are less likely to be dissuaded from airing their views through fear of prosecution. Some will be offended at any mention of the Armenian genocide for example, though this is a well document historical episode. We must be allowed at least to argue the merits of the case. An ideology's claim to truth often involves an implied or expressed corollary that others are inadequate, or misguided, or outmoded, or simply erroneous in at least some respect. [If members are inclined to dispute this last assertion, then paradoxically my point is established!] A democracy can only flourish when freedom of speech is allowed, even though this inevitably means that not everyone is going to be happy with every point of view that is expressed.

Yours faithfully

*John Davies*

Dr John Davies