

Submission to the inquiry on Exposure Draft of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012

Laws have existed for many, many years to protect from violence in various forms. There are also laws against inciting violence. These protections are reasonable and adequate for protecting people. For some reason in recent years it has become popular to add so called “anti-discrimination” and “anti-vilification” laws on top of these. While the intent of some sections of these may be noble they typically contain direct threats to the bedrock of our free democratic society, namely the freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

This proposed bill greatly expands the reach of these anti-discrimination laws and thus strongly undermines these other rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. By widening discrimination to include offence or insult, anything can come under its purview as someone can choose to take offence to anything they like. This bill seems to show absolutely no regard for the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. It in fact seems to deliberately depreciate any small allowance made for freedom of religion by insisting that the “protections” for religious freedom, known as ‘exceptions’, which apply to religious bodies and educational institutions, to be reviewed every three years.

I believe this bill needs to be discarded.