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Mr Richard Pye
Clerk of the Senate
Senate Standing Committee on Procedure
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: seniorclerk.committees.sen@aph.gov.au

Friday 20 July 2018

Dear Mr Pye

**Proposal to replace the parliamentary prayer
with an invitation to prayer or reflection**

Feminist Legal Clinic Incorporated is a new community legal service that works to advance the human rights of women and girls through a combination of targeted casework, community legal education and law reform work. We welcome the opportunity to comment on this proposal to replace the parliamentary prayer with an invitation to prayer or reflection.

We would suggest that this is a reform that is long overdue. The results of the latest national census confirmed that we are a religiously diverse nation with only 52% of the population identifying themselves as Christian. Furthermore, nearly a third of Australians report no religion and this percentage is growing rapidly.

The imposition of a historic religious tradition is clearly at odds with democratic values as well as the commitment to the separation of church and state set out in section 116 of the Australian Constitution. We would also suggest the use of protestant prayers encourages hypocritical lip service by our politicians and creates an environment that favours the dominant culture and is discriminatory towards adherents to other religious traditions and those with no religion.

Furthermore, we submit that in view of Christianity's historical and ongoing role in the oppression of women, it is also inherently disrespectful of women to continue with this use of prayers in parliament. The Christian Bible advocates the mistreatment of women as property of men and even the New Testament repeatedly requires their submission to male authority. We attach a couple of pages that identify in detail biblical passages that condone abusive and discriminatory treatment of women.

Article 5 of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires that:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women

We would therefore suggest that in order to comply with its international human rights obligations, as well as its own Constitution, the Australian Government must accept this proposal and replace the parliamentary prayer as a matter of priority. A commitment to secular government is essential to avoid systemic human rights infringements.

If you require any further information in relation to this submission, please contact Anna Kerr

Yours faithfully

Anna Kerr
Principal Solicitor

CH 23 Tale of two adulterous sisters – reads like the script of a pornographic film. I bet you weren't told this story at Sunday school!

HOSEA

13:16 Rip pregnant women, dash little ones. (Another "pro-life" verse!)

NAHUM

3:4... wanton lust of a harlot... prostitution... witchcraft.

3:5 I will lift your skirts over your face!

3:13... Your troops are all women. (insult to Nineveh)

MATTHEW

5:32 Husband can divorce wife for adultery. Can wife divorce husband for the same?

CH 25 Sexist tale of ten virgins.

LUKE

2:22 Mary must be purified after birth of Jesus.

2:49 Jesus rebukes his mother.

1 CORINTHIANS

11:2-10... Woman created for man.

14:34 Women must be silent in churches.

EPHESIANS

5:22-24 Wives must submit to husbands in everything.

COLOSSIANS

3:18 Wives submit to husbands.

3:22 Slaves must obey masters in everything.

1 TIMOTHY

2:11-15 Woman must not have authority – she must be silent. Women can be saved with childbearing.

5:9-10 Widows should be faithful to husband and must wash saints' feet.

1 PETER

2:18 Slaves submit to masters, even masters who are harsh.

3:1 Wives submit.

3:5-6 Sarah calls husband master.

REVELATION

CH 17 Destroy great prostitute.

14:4...they did not DEFILE themselves with women but kept themselves pure.

21:10-12 Slaughtered all inc. women and children. Saved virgins for wives.
21:21 Abducted girls for wives.

RUTH

Ruth shags Boaz.

1 SAMUEL

15:2-3 Attack Amalekites, kill men, women, children and livestock.
22:19 Kill all inc. infants and livestock.
21:4-5 Men avoid defilement with women.

2 SAMUEL

5:13 David took many wives and concubines.
CH 13 Ammon rapes his own sister.
16:21-22 Absalom sleeps with his father's concubines.
6:20-23 Mischal punished with bareness.

1 KINGS

11:3 Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

2 KINGS

9:30-37 Brutal murder of Jezebel.

2 CHRONICLES

15:13 Put to death unbelievers.
11:21 Hoards of wives and concubines.

ESTHER

CH 1-2 Queen Vashti dethroned for disobedience; setting "bad" example to all other women.

PSALMS

51:5 Sinful since conception.
127:3 Sons are heritage from god.
137:9 Seizes infants and dashes them against rocks.

PROVERBS

CH 5 Beware of wicked women!
CH 7 More of the above.
6:24 As above.
31:3 Do not waste strength on women.

ISAIAH

3:16-26 Lord punishes haughty women.
4:4 Filthy women.
13:16 Ravish wives, dash infants.
19:16 Will be like women! (insult to Egyptians)

EZEKIEL

9:6-7 Slaughter all including children.
CH 16 Prostitutes, stoning, promiscuity...

GENESIS

- 2:22 Eve created from Adam's rib.
- 3:16 Cursed with painful childbirth and domination by husband.
- 4:17 Cain marries sister?
- 4:19 Man marries two wives.
- 12:13-19 Abraham prostitutes wife.
- 19:1-8 Rape virgin daughters instead of male angels.
- 19:26 Lot's wife turned into pillar of salt for disobeying god.
- 19:30-38 Lot impregnates his two daughters while drunk. (So much for "family values"!)
- 20:2-12 Abraham prostitutes wife – again.
- 25:1-6 Keeping many concubines is OK.

EXODUS

- 20:17 Wife as property.
- 21:4 Wife and children belong to master.
- 21:7-11 OK to sell daughters. Female slaves can be used for sex.
- Polygamy permitted. Unwanted female slaves can be set "free" without payment of money.
- 22:18 Kill witches.

LEVITICUS

- 12:1 Childbirth a sin, Women unclean after childbirth.
- 15:19-32 Menstruating women are unclean.
- 20:10-16 Death penalty for homosexuality and various sexual transgressions.
- 21:7 Priests must not marry prostitutes or divorcees.
- 21:9 Burn daughters.
- 21:13-14 Priest must marry virgin, not "used" woman.

NUMBERS

- 1:2 Census lists only men – women do not count.
- 5:11-31 Fidelity test for women only.
- 30:1-16 Woman's vow invalid unless approved by her father or husband.
- 31:17-18 Kill all except virgins. Keep virgins for yourselves.
- CH 12 Miriam punished for rebuking Moses.

DEUTERONOMY

- 20:14 Take women, livestock as plunder.
- 22:13-21 Stone non-virgin bride.
- 22:23-24 Stone rapist and rape victim.
- 22:28 Rape victim must marry rapist; rape victim's father compensated for depreciation of his property.
- 25:11-12 Cut woman's hand for touching foe's penis.
- 24:1-5 Man can "send" wife from HIS house. Man must not marry "used" woman.
- 28:18 The FRUIT of your womb will be cursed – eclectic "pro-life" verse!

JUDGES

- 5:30 Women are spoils of war.
- 14:20 Samson gives wife to another man.
- 16:1 Samson visits prostitute.
- CH 19 Concubine pack-raped and butchered.