

Alastair Wilson

13th December 2012

Re: Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012

To whom it may concern:

Thank God this was brought to my attention today, as now I can submit my very strong opposition to this bill. I share the opinion of many conservative Christians that the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill undermines free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association and natural justice. My preference would be that it should be rejected outright, but the following amendments would make it more palatable:

To remove from clause 19 the words “conduct that offends, insults or intimidates” and the words “religion” and “political opinion” from the list of protected attributes in clause 17;

Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, The Honourable James Spigelman AC QC, just this week delivered a speech in Sydney in which he commented on this legislation and made the point that there is no right not to be offended. You can read about it here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4420410.html>

If I am discussing religion in my workplace, which happens occasionally, it is not reasonable that someone of Muslim extraction might be offended by Christianity's assertion that Jesus is the only way to God. I am sometimes offended by people taking Jesus' name in vain or suggesting that he's not God and even mocking him, but I let it go because there is *no right not to be offended* – and that's how it must be if we are to have freedom of speech and not an inundation of spurious complaints.

To delete clause 124 which reverses the onus of proof;

Reversing the onus of proof (so respondents must prove their innocence), then denying the right to have a legal adviser at conciliation conferences, is contrary to natural justice.

To allow respondents the right to legal representation if they wish;

See above re: clause 124.

To allow religious freedom to religious bodies in all circumstances;

Atheists and secular humanists love to shout about separation of church and state, continually telling the church to butt out of public discourse and policy making. What they fail to realise, however, is that it goes both ways. The state should not be telling religious bodies what they can and can't believe, and if they can live out their beliefs.

Yours faithfully,

Alastair Wilson