

I am very concerned to hear about The Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill. In Australia we are a country of freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, even the freedom to poke fun at each other from time to time. The very use of the term "offend" is so wishy-washy. Something that offends one person would not offend another. And if someone is having a bad day they could take exception to something that would normally not bother them. I remember well my days of PMT. I would take exception to the silliest things. Quite unreasonable, but don't try telling me that at the time!

The whole idea of being offended is one massive grey area. How can a law be based on that?

I can see that there are good intentions in this Bill, but in the outworking of it, the reality would be the undermining of free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association and natural justice.

It should be rejected, or at the very least, amended:-

- 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;
- to delete clause 124 which reverses the onus of proof;
- to allow respondents the right to legal representation if they wish;
- to allow religious freedom to religious bodies in all circumstances.

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