

Dear Senators,

I would like to make a submission regarding Senator Nicola Roxon's proposed Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012.

This Bill has the potential to inhibit and limit freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of legitimately discussing issues that vitally affect our personal and public life and of engendering a fear of saying anything that might in some way offend others.

Blatant vilification cannot be condoned, but is already covered by existing laws. While we should not intentionally give offence to others, unintentional offence is the price we pay for liberty and freedom of speech and must be accepted if these freedoms are to continue as a recent judgement in England has indicated.

Recent debate about the prank call to a London Hospital seems to have the consensus that legislation more restrictive than at present would not be in the best interests of freedom of speech but individuals do need to be reminded of their duty to observe existing codes of conduct.

This legislation, though well intended, would take us too far on the road to a totalitarian state where people are afraid to speak out to express their legitimate concern about the actions of others and must be resisted.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Claxton.