

National Human Rights Consultation Submission

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Submission Text:

Freedom of speech is one of our most important rights. The right to criticise powerful entities such as political parties, wealthy organisations and influential individuals helps us to prevent them from becoming too powerful. Religions are politically and economically powerful organisations capable of exerting a particularly oppressive form of tyranny (e.g. Iran and Afghanistan). Hence they should be open to strong public criticism. I strongly oppose legislation along the lines of Victoria's anti-religious-vilification laws, because they interfere with this kind of criticism.

The freedom to practice the religion of one's choice is another important right. However, this right should be subordinate to existing laws, such as those against polygamy, child abuse and violence. It should not entail the right to practice without hearing any criticism. On the contrary, adherents to a particular religion should hear criticism of that religion, because this is an important part of their religious freedom – the freedom to choose a religion different from their parents'.