

National Human Rights Consultation Submission

AGWW-7SC9DY

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Submission Text:

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in response to the currently discussed Human Rights Charter. I am concerned that this bill of rights will impede the freedoms of both religious and secular organisations in regards to freedom of speech, thought and expression. I also wish to express my objection to Religious Vilification laws.

I believe even just a brief look at the effects of such a bill in the UK testifies to the fact that however beneficial these rights appear in writing that they do not translate well into practice. How is justice any closer attained by the prosecution of a one religion because a majority adhere to it and not of another purely because it is a minority group? These separate religious groups always actively aim to further inter-religious dialogue. There have for example been several organisations constructed between faiths built upon common principles of social justice to help the under-privileged. This is not justice or equality, nor is it giving a "fair go" to different beliefs.

This argument, too, would not be a hard one to explain to an electorate. I am not the most knowledgeable on this topic by any means, but I am a member of an electorate with a vote and I can easily see the injustice here.

It appears that the only people unhappy about the freedom we have of speech and expression in Australia are perhaps Atheists, whom are by every historical measure a minority group, that are barracking for more power in our society. Here it may be noticed that the UK is a much more secular society (I believe, from memory).

In the end though, this discussion boils down to the question; why do we need a Bill of Human Rights? In such a self-maintaining democratic society based on common law and parliamentary democracy we have so much flexibility and a foundation that has proven it works. I could understand the need for a Bill of Rights in such counties as those of Canada and England in the 18th or 19th Century where those societies were not so established as ours and in the case of England still with the fear that perhaps a monarchy could quickly evolve into a dictatorship. Under these instances perhaps such a measure would be advisable. But in recent times we have the United Nations with International Covenants such as ICCPR and ICESCR together with the UDHR. Although we have no immediate implementation of the rights outlined in these International covenants the Australian Government may be guided to implement legislation to ensure the realisation of these rights.

I believe the existence of such bodies as the Commission of Human Rights in Australia is sufficient to ensure the lobby and voice for these rights. We simply do not require a 'black and white' bill to protect citizens against government powers. Might I add that it is these governmental powers that will be enforcing even this bill. If the Australian people require any more protection I advise they make a more direct route for International Covenants to be enforced in Australian Law, more like the US. In any case, would not accountability to an International power is far more comforting for a citizen than accountability to a bill that may be overridden by the State?

Lastly, in the case of Religious Vilification laws I think Mr. Carr has hit the nail on the head in paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson; "If my neighbor expresses a view whether there is one God or many Gods, he neither picks my pocket or breaks my limb".

Just as the Australian people firmly believe that the Church should have no place in Governance, neither should the Government outlay what is equitable in the religious world. People will believe what they wish to believe and most would regard the spectrum of religious bodies as a helpful mechanism in hearing the opinions of others to aid them in answering the in-built questions of life and existence. But is it a crime that any one religion should have more adherents? If you accept Thomas Jefferson's words (aforementioned) then this would be incriminating the idea of truth. Truth is not evil, nor is it "intolerant" considering the mutual exclusivity of the many religions.

Regards