

## AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY (ACL) SUPPORTS APPEAL FROM DOCTOR'S SUSPENSION FOR STATEMENTS OF 'VIOLENCE'

Decades ago, when, as a student nurse at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, I was caring for a woman who was haemorrhaging from a botched abortion. A young doctor appeared with the blood she needed to receive. He held up the blood and said, 'If it was up to me, I wouldn't be giving you this'. In other words, 'I would prefer that you die.'

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is demanding that doctors be permitted make public statements like this in reviving its promotion of the Religious Discrimination Bill. It is spearheading a massive push for the appeal of a decision quashing a doctor's right to practice for making similar comments to the ones I heard.

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) has revived its promotion of the Religious Discrimination Bill by spearheading a massive push for the appeal of a decision regarding a doctor's right to practice.

In August 2019, the Medical Board of Australia stripped Dr Jereth Kok of his right to practice. He 'appeared to condone or call for violence and/or genocide towards racial and religious groups' on Facebook'. The suspension upheld by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) in March this year.

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- *Denigrate, demean and slur doctors who provide abortions, endorse calls for their capital punishment and disparage those who treat gender dysphoria according to law;*
- *Endorse/call for violence and/or genocide toward racial and religious groups;*
- *Express and encourage demeaning views regarding LGBTQI persons that are contrary to accepted medical practice.*

The Board identified some 30 examples upon which it specifically relied in support of its decision.

Regarding those seeking an abortion, Dr Kok says

*I tell the woman politely that it is against my moral principles to advise on this issue, and they need to find someone else to help them. (In a few instances I have attempted to talk them out of it.) Yes, I'm breaking Victoria's new abortion laws, but I don't give a stuff.*

*If a woman dies on a quack abortionist's table, 'that's exactly what she deserved.'*

I note that behaviour which incites violence or encourages hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule on the basis of their race or religion is prohibited in Victoria.

The Tribunal held that the postings may cause people to doubt he could provide respectful care:

"Members of the medical profession cannot allow their commentary to escalate unchecked without any regard to the impact on or sensibilities of their Code of Conduct," the ruling states.

"We have grave concerns about whether the community would accept that any medical practitioner could switch, as though he were a light, from airing disrespectful views online to providing respectful and appropriate treatment for those who fall within a class he denigrates online.

“We also have concerns about the level of respect he can bring to other members of his own profession with whom he may have to engage and/or refer patients to.”

They held that it was in the public interest to deprive someone of his right to practice.

The ACL has adopted Dr Kok’s appeal from this decision as the latest step in its campaign for ‘freedom of religion’, to raise the pressure on Parliament and has vowed to give him ‘all the support that he needs’ to appeal the decision. ‘The [disingenuously named, ACL sponsored] *Human Rights Law Alliance* would stand ready to ensure that can be done because it would be the right thing to do.’ Referring to the need to ‘restore [sic] religious freedom when regular parliament resumes’ he described the call for violence and/genocide ‘simply saying something that some people do not like, without evidence of any harm.’

Once again, as with their defence of Israel Foleau, the ACL demands that Christians can throw the integrity of their profession into doubt, by ignoring the effects of this on both other members and the public. They deny the responsibility of a person who undertakes to maintain the standards of the profession they undertake, and which is particularly important in the medical profession.

*Australian Rationalist Society* president Dr Meredith Doig commented: ‘If the Religious Discrimination Bill becomes law, it will embolden other doctors to follow Dr Kok’s inflammatory and offensive conduct in the name of religion,’ Dr Doig said. ‘The government has much bigger problems right now and should knock this bill straight off the agenda.’