

WE SHOULD REJECT THE RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION BILL

Here are 10 reasons why (among others):

1. We don't need it! The Ruddock Report concludes that religious freedom is already well protected. *T No one has yet established a clear case for its enactment.* The Report concludes that any case of suppression of having or practising one's existential beliefs (religious or otherwise), should be dealt with through current anti-discrimination laws, with appropriate consideration of existing exemptions.
2. The Australian Law Reform Commission is still considering the question of religious organisations' exemptions from discrimination law, including some proposed in the Bill. It won't report until April 2020, So, what's the hurry?
3. Despite the confusing fact that 'religious belief' includes non-religious belief, the Bill makes it clear it is all about 'religion' (which is not defined), with no recognition of discrimination on other grounds of belief. It lends itself to social divisiveness by purporting to give one human right (freedom of religion) priority over all others,
4. The Bill will make life excessively complex and uncertain for employers, sporting organisations and basically everyone: in some cases, it seems from comments, even religious bodies themselves.
5. The Bill establishes as a legal fact that the freedom of institutional religion is more important than the freedom of individual religion, let alone non-religious belief. For example, offending the 'sensibilities' and 'ethos' of religious institutions is a ground for refusing anyone services and employment.
6. Apart from its confusion ('religious belief?'), complexity ('discrimination' takes 3 pages to define), and potential legal density, overall the bill creates a two-class society, based on the legal acceptance of *perceived sinfulness*.
7. Those considered 'sinful' (e.g., those who are LGBTI+, single mothers, divorcees, women seeking reproductive services those seeking voluntary assisted dying and the non-religious aged) are legally treated less worthy of equal treatment before the law, as the perception of being sinful is enough to disrespect their human rights.
8. The bill may breach the Australian Constitution under the foreign affairs power by allowing health practitioners to refuse treatment to those needing it, through denial of their human rights.
9. The Bill will allow defendants in a discrimination action before a State anti-discrimination tribunal to move the matter to a federal court, with resulting much more expensive and complex court hearings.
10. Despite its purported protection of non-religious belief, the Bill fails to deal with discrimination against those with no religion. This includes:
 - potential denial of services, including provision of health care, services goods, and employment and the allowance of derision of the non-religious ('sinful') no matter how harmful or offensive;
 - the influence of religion in politics. Prayers begin parliamentary sessions, religious ceremonies are used to start the parliamentary year and sittings of parliament, and religious (namely Christian) views are used as justification of government policy formation, whether they are acknowledged or not;
 - public funding of educational institutions, registered charities or *any other body* conducted in accordance with a particular religion that is not engaged *solely or primarily* in commercial activities;
 - public funding of religious instruction and religious chaplains in public schools;
 - reduced accountability required of religious bodies and schools.