

We write concerning the Government Discussion Paper released in Sept. 2011, and aimed at consolidating Commonwealth anti-discrimination law.

As Neil Foster, Senior Lecturer of the Newcastle Law School, explains: when human rights are under discussion there becomes a need to balance one person's rights against those of another. In recent times there has been a subtle shift away from of a fully-orbed recognition of rights to a point where protection now needs to be provided against interference with the perfectly legitimate and fundamental beliefs of some others.

Neil Foster also makes the point that any freedom a person has will usually involve a duty on another person's part to allow them to pursue their freedom without being subject to charges of discrimination. As the results of much previous discussion about human rights versus religious freedom have shown, the greatest fear of the majority of Australian citizens today is that our wonderful freedom-loving country is threatened with becoming one which will have radical 'religious' or secular-society driven human rights laws forced most unfairly on all the people.

Thus our concern is for the adverse effects of the proposed government legislation, which would eventually give the government, and judicial courts, the power to shape or 'consolidate' our laws irrespective of the will of the majority.

Therefore; We strongly oppose the introduction of anti-discrimination laws which would limit our freedoms of choice, for the reasons stated above. We oppose anti-discrimination laws based on gender and sexuality also. Such laws, as we have already experienced in our state, and in our country, engender unacceptable division and hatred. This right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and religious expression, is a very important right. There are a number of examples of the divisive nature of such laws. eg., The protracted case of Wesley Mission in Sydney after it turned down the application of a same-sex couple wanting to become foster carers for a child in their institution. Another example is the refusal of the CYC Camp committee on Philip Island, Victoria, to accept a booking for a particular group.

Please allow us to continue to be the community of people we have been renowned to be all these years; tolerant, and with each one free to be just who we are, within the Constitutional laws of our land.

Respectfully submitted by
David and Ruth Cummings

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