Dear Attorney General

I am writing to you because I am concerned at the lack of protection for religious freedom in Australia. It was one of the reasons that the Morrison Government was re-elected at the 2019 election. While the government says that it is keeping its election promise by introducing a religious discrimination act, many believe, myself included, that Prime Minister Morrison created the expectation that the coalition would provide robust religious freedom. After reviewing the exposure draft of a proposed religious discrimination act, I believe that this draft means a whole lot of work before it can provide robust religious freedom. There are a number of improvements that must be made and I will discuss them below.

The bill is not clear. It does not clearly define many important things:
• What is lawful religious activity?
• What happens if a local council passes a by-law that bans any of my religious activities in public places? Will that make my activities ‘unlawful’?
• What does it mean to vilify? If I openly quote my scripture and someone thinks I have ‘vilified’ them, what happens to me? Will I get sacked? Will I become the next Israel Folau?
• Who decides what is reasonable religious activity? Judges, a jury, theologians?
• What about if my doctor refuses to participate in a practice and someone says that they have suffered an 'unjustifiable adverse impact'? Who decides this? The bill is not consistent.
• If I work for an employer who makes >$50 million, then I get different protection than if I work for a smaller employer. Why should the protection of MY RIGHT to my religious freedom depend on how much money that my employer makes? That is not consistent with the Australian ethos of a ‘fair go for all’.
• Another way it’s inconsistent is that in one part it overrides state anti-discrimination acts, but in other places, it says that state laws apply. What’s the point of having a FEDERAL law that suppose to protect my rights, if ultimately, my rights are really dependent on STATE law. My religion follows me whichever state I live in, so my protection for my religious freedom must follow me as well. So, if this bill is going to give me ROBUST religious freedom, then it must override state laws.

The bill is not complete:
• It doesn’t address all aspects of my religious freedom. I notice that more and more, sex education programs such as ‘Safe Schools’ that teach radical gender theory have made their way into state schools. I don’t want my kids taught stuff like this as it is against my religion. So I want the right to withdraw my kids from such classes and the bill doesn’t deliver this.
• It doesn’t give religious schools the right to hire teachers who reflect the teaching of their religion. While the government may have legalised same sex marriage, I believe that parents should have the right to send their kids to a religious school where they don’t hire openly gay teachers or those in a same sex marriage. That’s the whole point of sending your kids to a religious school. The bill does not do this and that’s another reason it needs a whole lot of work.

So, in conclusion, this bill does not give robust religious freedom for workers, schools, churches, parents, doctors and anyone who openly proclaims their faith. So it really doesn’t give robust religious freedom for anyone. The bill needs a major overhaul with
many changes made.