

senator.cash@aph.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General,

Religious Discrimination Bill

We are writing to express our serious concerns about the Government's proposed Religious Discrimination Bill. We understand from media reporting this is expected to be introduced to Parliament during the final sitting weeks of the year.

We are writing to you to ask you to not proceed with the Bill. We are extremely concerned that the impact of the Bill will be that it will allow discrimination and reduce existing discrimination protections.

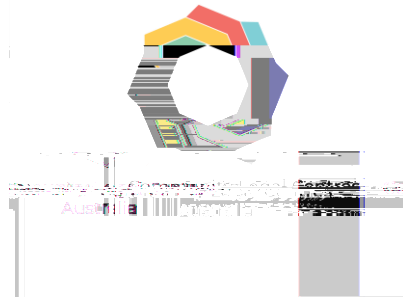
The Government's proposed Religious Discrimination Bill on 29 August 2019 and 10 December 2019 were extremely alarming in allowing discrimination and increasing legal complexity in this area. In our view this Bill has the effect of significantly winding back existing discrimination protections in Australia, when the Australian Government should be increasing legal protections in this area.

Kingsford Legal Centre is a community legal centre, providing free legal advice, casework and community legal education to people in south-east Sydney. We specialise in discrimination law and run a state-wide Discrimination Law Clinic. In 2020, we gave 297 discrimination advices and provided intensive assistance with 71 discrimination matters. This letter is also endorsed by Community Legal Centres Australia and Community Legal Centres NSW.

Our organisation's support protection from discrimination and increasing human rights protection in Australia. We believe that protection from discrimination should be increased in Australian law, including through a Charter of Human Rights. However, this Bill does not have this effect and will increase discrimination and reduce human rights protection. For example, from what we understand the Bill may protect an employer or co-worker who says:

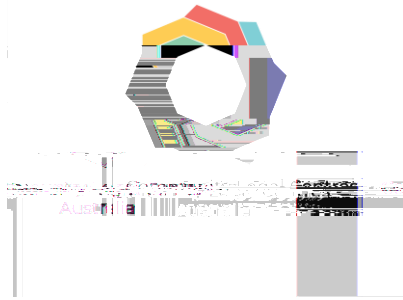
- x To women in the workplace: That they should be at home caring for children
- x To an LGBTQI+ staff member: That they are going to hell
- x To a person with a disability or health condition: That they need religious intervention to cure them

This will have significant implications for the inclusion, safety and wellbeing of people experiencing marginalisation in the workplace and realisation of equality for many members of the community in Australia.



We also oppose the Bill as it will interfere with the provision of vital social services (many of which fall within publicly funded areas of government responsibility). For example, the draft Bill may:

- x Allow a doctor in a public hospital to refuse to provide the morning after pill to a woman
- x



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Religious Discrimination Bill

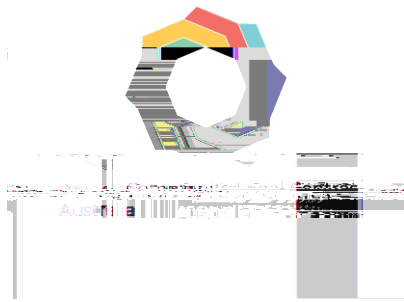
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