



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **AUSTRALIAN PROGRESSIVES WELCOME DELAY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BILL, CALL FOR THE BILL TO BE SCRAPPED**

The Australian Progressives have welcomed the delay on the vote of the *Religious Freedom Bill 2019* in the federal parliament but have called on parliamentarians to scrap the bill in its entirety.

Australian Progressives Policy Director Nicolle Burt has called for the bill be shelved. “As Progressives, we view the Religious Freedom Bill as contrary to our values as Australians residing in a democratic secular state,” Burt said. “Australians of all beliefs are already free to engage in their faith without hindrance or discrimination. This Bill only ignites the religious divisions within the community.”

The Australian Progressives will move to legislate the separation of church and state. “Our view is articles of faith are private and are not matters for Governments to legislate. This forms the basis for our policies related to the separation between Church and State”.

The bill alleges to protect expression of religious speech in good faith by stating that such speech does not constitute discrimination under commonwealth, state or territory anti-discrimination law and does not contravene subsection 17(1) of the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1998.

That provision bans speech that “offends, insults or humiliates” people based on a range of grounds including gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability and relationship status. The one big exception is that religious bodies can discriminate on the grounds of religion where their conduct is “in good faith, [and] may reasonably be regarded as being in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of their religion”.

“The Morrison Government is clearly attempting to capitalize on this division by positing faith-based views over the lives and choices of all Australians. This is unacceptable. Moreover, to say this Bill is friendless is a gross understatement,” Ms Burt continued. “Most Australians view this Bill as a sham in the Morrison Government’s attempt to give religious organisations more privilege and authority than they are entitled to.”

This bill, if successful, will enshrine and encourage discrimination against minorities under the cloak of religious freedom.

**ENDS**



#### About Australian Progressives:

We believe in the advancement of an empathetic society - one in which all citizens of Australia can reach their full potential and find fulfilment in their lives within a thriving democracy. We will be a government with the guts to advance society through laws, services and infrastructure, for the benefit of all people. We believe government and communities should work together to develop creative and passionate individuals who can improve the world around them, embracing education, technology, science, culture and global leadership.

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