

Women's and LGBTIQ+ groups are demanding the Morrison Government deliver on equal protections and consultation

9 July 2019

Last night's Q and A highlighted the Morrison Government's lack of consultation so far on the proposed Religious Discrimination Act.

Diana Sayed[^], Campaign Manager for Fair Agenda (a women's rights campaigning organisation) called on the Morrison Government to ensure that any Act doesn't give people a licence to discriminate.

"It's important that any reforms in this area don't create a licence to discriminate, and allow someone to use their religion as an excuse to discriminate against others.

"It's vital that the Government ensure through this process that people of faith, women and LGBTIQ+ people are protected equally." Ms Sayed added.

Fair Agenda has joined with LGBTIQ+ advocacy organisation Equality Australia in petitioning the Government to ensure people of faith, women and LGBTIQ+ people are protected equally; and have urged the Government to meet with them and other affected communities during their consultation period to ensure these protections are realised.

They've expressed concern that inappropriately drafted indirect discrimination provisions could interfere with current protections under employment policies, which are designed to provide safe and healthy workplaces and to ensure staff publicly uphold a company's values of inclusion and non-discrimination.

They've also queried the impact of any unfettered free speech provisions that some religious lobby groups have been arguing for, which could override important reproductive health protections such as safe access zones that operate in many states.

"In most states there are safe zones in place at abortion care clinics to protect patients and doctors from the harassment and intimidation they were previously subjected to by picketers – many of whom would consider their actions to be religiously motivated. The High Court has held that these safe access zones should stay, but conservative religious lobby groups are still [calling on the Government to remove these essential protections](#)." Ms Sayed concluded.

"The Government has said they want to find balance and will consult – yet the people who will be most negatively impacted by the Bill have not been invited to meet with them," said Lee Carnie*, Director of Legal Advocacy at Equality Australia.

“We want to see anti-discrimination protections that ensure affirming churches can continue their practice and that LGBTIQ+ people, single mums and divorcees can access services run by religious organisations without fear of being turned away or condemned for who they are.

“The Morrison Government needs to be transparent about the draft Bill and undertake a full consultation with those who are most impacted by these debates”, concluded Carnie.

^uses she/her pronouns

*uses they/them pronouns

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