

Petition Delivery: Advocates reject unbalanced religious discrimination 'sword'

Tuesday, 10 September 2019

LGBTIQ+, racial justice, and women's advocates today delivered a petition to the Shadow Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and Greens Senator Janet Rice arguing for a fair Religious Discrimination Bill.

The Exposure Draft released by the Morrison Government in Sydney has been closely analysed by legal experts and revealed to privilege religious belief above the rights of all other Australians.

"This Bill creates one set of rights for some Australians, and a different set of rights for everyone else", said Anna Brown* CEO of Equality Australia.

"The Government promised a Bill in the style of existing anti-discrimination laws and what we have instead will punch holes in protection from discrimination for the majority of Australians."

Diana Sayed*, Campaign Manager for Fair Agenda said "We are very concerned that the bill in its current form will negatively impact women's access to reproductive healthcare. One person's religious beliefs should never limit another person's access to the healthcare they need."

Neha Madhok*, Co-Director of Democracy in Colour said "This proposed legislation goes too far. It gives license to override state discrimination protections including those based on race, gender, sexuality and disability.

"With the rise of hate crimes, particularly against people from Muslim communities, we have to protect all minority faith groups from vilification. We need a bill that is balanced and fair for everyone.

"We're seeing calls for burqa bans, vandalism of temples and religious sites and even campaigns by community groups to prevent the building of mosques. This bill must include a definition of vilification so that there is protection from something like Islamophobia."

The Reverend Dr Josephine Inkpin, an Anglican priest and trans woman, speaking also for Equal Voices, called for "Fresh legislative approaches to enable LGBTIQ *and* religious Australians to live together - after all some of us are both! Privilege and segregation are dead ends. We need, as Jesus said, with no exceptions, to learn to love all our neighbours".

*uses she/her pronouns

MEDIA CONTACT: Hayley Conway, 0484 313 466

