



ATTORNEY-GENERAL

CANBERRA

MC15/03035

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2015 regarding the petition submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding Islam in Australia (1009/1494). I have considered the petition and reject its proposition.

Section 116 of the Australian Constitution, which effectively establishes a freedom of religion at the Commonwealth level, provides that:

The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

All Australians are free to choose their religion, and should be able to express and practice their religion and beliefs, without intimidation and without interference, provided those practices are within the framework of Australian law. Australia affords people the freedom to express their opinions through peaceful and constructive means. In fact, the Government actively encourages all individuals and organisations to engage with our democratic processes and to make a positive contribution to public debate.

Religious freedom is of very great importance in Australian society. The Australian Government values freedom of belief as an essential feature of our multicultural and diverse democracy. This nation is home to many faiths, united by acceptance, mutual respect and a commitment to democratic traditions.

Thank you again for writing on this matter.

Yours faithfully

(George Brandis)