



The Hon.
**PAUL
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Christian Democratic Party
Member of the NSW Legislative Council

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Mr Richard Pye
Clerk of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Wednesday, 1 August 2018

Dear Mr Pye,

RE: Proposal to replace the parliamentary prayer with an invitation to prayer or reflection.

I am writing to you today in my capacity as a Member of the New South Wales Legislative Council, Member for the Christian Democratic Party NSW.

Since 1901, the Lord's Prayer has been recited at the start of each sitting day in the Senate and the House of Representatives by the President and Speaker of the House, respectively and I am writing today to show my support to see the status quo remain.

Here in the Parliament of New South Wales each sitting day we to pray the Lord's Prayer in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

This prayer has held both people and communities together when it seems that all hope is lost. It encourages me to put my hope and trust in Him that our state will prosper. This is not to take away the diversity of thought and belief that is represented in our Federal Parliament.

Personally and for many faith-based Australians, this tradition represents a moment in time where we draw reassurance that the decisions made in our Houses of Parliament and how they play out across our state are in God's control. It is important that we acknowledge our own fallibility at times, while we do our best we do not always get it right.

As it says in Proverbs 16:9, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps". The words of the Lord's Prayer gives me confidence that He is in control.

Beyond the praying of the Lord's Prayer I believe it also reflects our Judeo-Christian heritage. Christianity has had a profound impact on the development of Western institutions, including our Parliaments.

Australia was founded on a principle of separation of church and our Australian Constitution speaks to how religion is to be treated in our nation, it precludes the Commonwealth of Australia from:

"116. Commonwealth not to legislate in respect of religion:

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."

Considering the Federal Government was established with this fundamental principle and the principle of separation of church and state, yet it was still seen fit to utilise the Lord's Prayer for the opening of the House's each day.

I agree with the Australian Christian Lobby who earlier this year stated;

"Most of us would condemn the cutting down of a 113 year old tree, but when it comes to our cultural heritage the Greens are happy to fell any vestiges of the values of our past. Greens Senator Richard Di Natale cites the separation of church and state for wanting to remove the prayer.

This misunderstanding of the concept is becoming wearisome. The Greens and others who abuse this concept are attempting to cloak their secularism in neutrality and objectivity, but in reality seem to be excluding Christianity in order to substitute their own secular irreligion.

Australia was founded with the principle of separation of church and state but it was never meant to keep religious ideas, people or even prayers out of public life."

Today, following the Australian Postal Plebiscite, we are now in a conversation around how we can protect our right to religious belief and values in our nation. And here we see yet again, how political forces are representing rising secularism and seeking to alter our long-standing institutions and their traditional values. Values and traditions that for the last 200 years have shaped our nation, built our democracy to what it is today. We have a diverse democracy and I do not seek to change this, but what I do seek is a true sense of tolerance- where by both sides can agree to disagree and still respect the other's right to a different view.

If our society becomes one where faith and belief has no place in the workplace, this would be anti-democratic. A secular belief, is still a belief. It guides an individual in their values and ethics and they have a right to make decisions based on their moral beliefs. Just the same as I, based on my Christian beliefs, have a right to make decisions on my moral beliefs. They guide us just the same way.

I believe in our democracy we must continue to move towards true tolerance. The Lord's prayer should remain in our Federal Parliament as it should remain in our NSW Parliament – it is a part of the founding of these institutions and acknowledges our heritage. Times change and I acknowledge that – but in the days moving forward we must not forget where we came from and the traditions and values that have shaped our nation and made it what it is today.

The Lord's prayer simply highlights the values that we as politicians and we as citizens of this great nation should seek to embody in our everyday life. We are not in total control of our destiny and we should always seek to forgive, serve and love those around us.

Yours sincerely,

Hon. Paul Green MLC

Member for the NSW Legislative Council

Member for the Christian Democratic Party NSW