



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

General Secretariat

2 February 2018

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email: pjcis@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Further information - Review of the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill 2017

While the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference was giving evidence to the Committee on Tuesday, Mr Julian Leeser MP asked a question that we took on notice.

The question was, in relation to the United States *Foreign Agents Registration Act* (FARA) "... whether, through any of your contacts in America, you've had any discussions about how those religious exemptions have operated" (Draft Committee Hansard, 30 January 2018, page 11).

I am writing to advise that we contacted both the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Health Association of the USA and were advised that they were not aware of any instances where the exemption had not been effective to exempt Catholic persons and services from the operation of the FARA.

We therefore continue to request the alternative wording for clause 27 as based on the US Act, as recommended in our submission. You would be aware that the US legislation is drafted in different terms to the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill* as there is a broad exemption for organizations engaged in "religious, scholastic, academic, or scientific pursuits or of the fine arts," as well as for those "not serving predominantly a foreign interest".

Yours faithfully

(signed)

Jeremy Stuparich
Public Policy Director