

Dear Committee Secretary,

[Article 19](#) from the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

Should the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 pass into law as it currently stands, then Australian's will not have the right to freedom of opinion and expression as expressed by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and instead will be on par with totalitarian regimes like China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burma and Yemen who severely censor freedom of opinion and expression.

Inserting political and religious opinions as new grounds of discrimination is not only wrong, but dangerous for our Liberal Democracy. If you want to know who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticise. Is that the Australia we all want to live in? If freedom of opinion means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

It is therefore imperative that the words “*political opinion*” and “*religion*” be removed from section 17, Division 2 the Protected Attributes (1)(k) and (1)(o) clause.

The words “*other conduct that offends, insults or intimidates the other person*” must also be removed from section 19, Division 2 Meaning of Discrimination (2)(b).

As for reversing the onus of proof, meaning anyone who is accused of “discrimination” will have to prove they're not guilty is a massive attack on our rights and the right to be presumed innocent. The onus of proof should always be on the person making the accusation not the defendant.

Thomas Jefferson, 3rd US President, was right when he said that “*The liberty of speaking and writing guards our other liberties.*”

These new laws, should they pass as they are currently drafted, will do nothing but weaken the liberties of all Australians.

This committee should instead be legislating our very own “First Amendment” into our Constitution:

*Parliament shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*

Freedom of opinion and expression means some people will be offended and I'm personally offended by people who get offended.

Regards,

**Andy Semple**