



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

HUMAN RIGHTS SUB-COMMITTEE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

Inquiry into the status of religion or belief

Freedom of religion or belief hearings in Sydney and Melbourne

An inquiry into the status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief will hold hearings in Sydney and Melbourne this week.

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade [Human Rights Sub-Committee](#) Chair [Kevin Andrews MP](#) says the hearings will focus on the legal framework of religious freedom in Australia.

“Australia has certain obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights instruments,” Mr Andrews said.

The Sub-Committee will sit for two days of public hearings in Sydney and Melbourne on 6 and 7 June, and hear from legal and academic experts.

The hearings begin in Sydney with an appearance by constitutional law scholar Professor George Williams AO.

“We have an opportunity to examine how effectively Australia is meeting its obligations, with highly qualified legal scholars and religious freedom advocates offering a diverse range of legal opinions,” Mr Andrews said.

“There are a number of protections of this fundamental freedom in the Constitution, in Commonwealth, State, and Territory legislation, and in the common law.

“The effectiveness, or otherwise, of these protections, and whether Australia needs a more comprehensive legislative framework, will be discussed in detail.”

The programs for the two hearings can be found on the inquiry [website](#).

Public hearing details:

Date: Tuesday 6 June 2017

Time: 9.00am to 3.40pm

Location: The Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney

Date: Wednesday 7 June 2017

Time: 10.00am to 3.00pm

Location: Committee Services Office, Room G.1, 55 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne

These hearings will be streamed live at www.aph.gov.au/live.

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Interested members of the public may wish to track the committee via the [website](#). Click on the blue 'Track Committee' button in the bottom right hand corner and use the forms to login to My Parliament or to register for a My Parliament account.

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