

Dear Senators,

I write to you in support of the Tax Laws Amendment (Public Benefit Test) Bill 2010. I would like to see this Bill passed unchanged. With the recent raid on Agape Ministries, I can't help but wonder why there is tax exemption for religious organisations on the basis of being a religion instead of any actual charitable contribution to society. As it stands the current system in this regard is both open to abuse and inefficient categorisation of organisations that benefit the public.

In these turbulent economic times, proper tax collection without waste is paramount. This bill is needed so honest charitable organisations can claim tax exemption and at the same time deny that benefit to groups who would abuse it. A public benefit test is the best way to achieve this, as clearly religion alone is not a good test as demonstrated by Agape Ministries, or Scientology.

With this test, proper charitable organisations can continue to provide a benefit to the public so long as they do so. It would go without saying that religion alone would not be in the public interest, otherwise the bill will achieve absolutely nothing and it would be wide open to dangerous cults again. Apart from that, what public benefit does a mosque provide to all non-Muslim Australians? What good is a synagogue for all non-Jewish Australians, or any of the above for non-believers? Indeed, how is the benefit public if one needs to convert to a different faith? Religion alone should not be a factor: churches and any other religious organisation will still be exempt if they offer an actual public benefit.

Please support this bill, if not to prevent abuse by dangerous cults, to at least help Australia's budget by properly exempting those who offer a tangible benefit to the public and taxing those who would take advantage of honest taxpayers.

-Dane Weber  
North Lakes, QLD