

Dear Secretary

I am making this submission to the Tax Amendment Bill which seeks to introduce a public benefit test to all charitable groups.

I submit that the criteria of public benefit over public harm by any charitable group could be easily manipulated by special interest groups seeking to harm or destroy the charity in question. Indeed I believe this is what we are currently witnessing when it comes to the controversy surrounding the Church of Scientology. I have watched and read a number of articles and television programmes that have targeted Scientology based upon claims being made by a few former members of the religion. Yet the stories they are telling I believe are heavily slanted and biased and are seeking to justify the departure from a group they once belonged to.

I submit that this forum of public submissions to this bill resembles a public stoning of ages past. My religion is guilty of no crime yet there is an open invitation built into the Explanatory Memorandum to criticise the religion of Scientology. I further submit that this will be exploited by a special interest group of former members with close ties to the Senator who presented this bill before the Senate. Thus in this climate of negative (unfounded) claims in the media and elsewhere, this submission process to this bill is being dubbed an "Inquiry into Scientology", both by the former members themselves as well as Senator Xenophon.

I am a member of the Church of Scientology and I have studied the religion for 9 years and have participated in numerous activities in the Church including working on staff in Melbourne as an executive and also counselling friends and family as a trained minister.

From my own observation I have seen and experienced a great deal of help on some very practical and tangible levels. For example applying Scientology principles I have overcome major problems in my family and have achieved a very close relationship with my mother, when prior to me studying Scientology we were constantly fighting, and also I have been able to overcome a shyness and have become an extremely successful salesman.

I have learned the principles of Scientology to help others and thus have been able to assist many friends and family, for example I counselled my sister through a marriage break-up and she is now about to remarry.

Like all religions and people of conscience, my religion enables people to lead a better life and to help others. I have worked with a number of Scientology-based programmes which help out in the community, including (helping the firefighters in the Victorian bushfires, helping promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through the Youth for Human Rights group and also helped send some volunteer ministers to help during the 2008 Tsunami in Banda Aceh)

As a Scientologist I uphold the freedom and respect of all religions and beliefs as a fundamental right. It is the intolerance and discrimination towards the beliefs of others that has caused tremendous upheavals throughout the world, and it continues to do so. Here in Australia we enjoy freedoms other lands envy, and in large part it is due to a tolerance of religious beliefs, enshrined in our constitution and protected by our courts.