

The Secretary,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Dear Sir/Madam:

I wish to register opposition to the above Bill. I believe it should be totally rejected.

My main reason for opposing this Bill is that it will necessarily restrict the freedoms of speech, conscience and religion.

An example: The Bill will prohibit any conduct that offends or insults (".....is reasonably likely, in all circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people"). This situation seems untenable to me. In a robust democratic debate anyone can feel offended when his/her stoutly held view is not shared or respected by the other party. The essence of robust public debate includes the strong possibility of "offence". If that possibility is removed, freedom of expression is lost.

I am particularly concerned with the new grounds for "offence" introduced by this Bill: sexual orientation and gender identity.

This Bill opens the way for people to cowardly sue each other for perceived offence. It's over-government & therefore unnecessary legislation.

Some years' ago an obviously aboriginal man recklessly crossed a busy thoroughfare at peak hour. When I expressed my genuine concern regarding his dangerous conduct, he called me "a white pig". Was I offended? Yes. Should I report this type of case to the anti-discrimination authorities should the above Bill become law? I wouldn't bother.
Yet this is what could continually occur if this Bill is passed.

Regards,

Spero Katos