

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting this response to the call for citizen opinion on MP Nick Xenophon's **Tax Laws Amendment (Public Benefit Test) Bill 2010**. I whole-heartedly endorse and support the addition of a public benefit test that *all* religions and charitable organizations must pass to be considered for tax exemption in Australia.

I do not believe the buck should stop with organizations of poor public standing such as Scientology, but that all religious organizations no matter how old, no matter how many followers in somebodies electorate, must be strictly held to the same standard.

As a proud non-theist, it offends me deeply that my tax dollars can find their way into the hands (and off-shore bank accounts, such as the doomsday cult in Adelaide recently) of corrupt organizations posing as beacons of supposed morality and good will towards all mankind. How many times do we have to hear about the abuses of children by the clergy before enough is enough? They must be held accountable, and if the only way that can be done is by making them pay their own way (for now) then that is what must be done.

Furthermore, there is plenty of talk around the blogosphere that this Bill is doomed to get off the ground, and this would be a good start towards recognising that there is definite bias in our government towards support of the religious position over the secular or non-theist. Below is a weblink to an article written about the funding debacle over the Global Atheist Convention of 2010 in Melbourne earlier this year.

<http://blogs.radionational.net.au/atheistconvention/?p=524>

Please direct your attention to the comment section, specifically those by David Nicholls, the president of the Atheist Foundation of Australia. The last figure I heard was that the Pope's last visit to Australia cost taxpayers 4.5 million dollars. David Nicholls was only asking for a few hundred thousand, but the application was stalled, ignored and eventually denied. It's not like the Pope needs the money. I've been to the Vatican. If you sold every piece of art and gold in Vatican City you could end world hunger, and that's not even an exaggeration. This is not an organization that requires public funding. This double standard has to end, and this Bill is the first step towards that end.

Make the Church pay its' own way.