

## **Federal Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 – Submission by George Kokonis**

I strongly oppose the Federal Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill, as proposed by Senator Roxon on a number of grounds. They are as follows:

### **1. Reversal of the Burden of Proof (Section 124)**

This section allows a complainant to allege that another person's conduct has insulted or offended them, and the burden of proof falling on the one accused to prove that this wasn't the case. **What a ridiculous proposition.**

The basis of law is that people are **innocent until proven guilty**, with the burden of proof resting on those bringing charges. Why would the government seek to alter this? What is the agenda with messing with the most fundamental of legal rights?

### **2. Making a complaint because you feel offended or insulted.**

This again is a ridiculous proposition. People feel offended often by the most ridiculous things. People will feel that they are not allowed to express their strong opinion on anything, for fear of some soft and self conscious person taking offence or feeling insulted. What a joke!

### **3. Freedom of Speech**

Another fundamental right in our nation is the **freedom of thought and speech**. For the government to attempt to legislate this away tampers with another of our most basis rights.

People might not like what another says or thinks about them, but in the end, another person's thoughts are indeed their own, and they have the right to express them, as long as they are not defamatory. We already have laws in place for dealing with that, so what is the reason behind trying to stop people from the freedom of speech?

Freedom of speech is a fundamental right guaranteed both by Australian law and by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Tampering with such rights violates our international obligations and indeed tampers with the very fabric of democracy. Surely the government must realise this?

Is the Australian public really expected to renounce their right to free speech simply because what might be said hurts someone's feelings? That is what this legislation will in the end amount to. It's simply ridiculous!

As well as pandering to soft and weak people, this bill will stifle free speech and opinion. This is a serious step in the direction of totalitarianism. It's a disgrace that the government is pushing this sort of agenda.