

## **Reasons for retaining the opening prayers (especially the Lord's Prayer) in Parliament:**

### **(1) Australia did not become what it is in a vacuum.**

The opening prayers have the same historical value as the acknowledgement of country, and for the same reason—they are an honest acknowledgement of where we have come from as a country.

Christianity had a profound impact on the development of western institutions, including parliament. Whether people believe in God or not, the ideas of the teacher Jesus embodied in the Lord's Prayer are worth reflecting on. If the Parliament no longer says the Lord's Prayer this would signal a denial of the significance of Christ's teaching for our country's history and health.

### **(2) Whatever else prayer might be, it is an act of humility.**

There is something beautiful and noble about our leaders acknowledging they are not top dog in the universe—expressing out loud that they are accountable to Something higher than themselves and that, despite their commitment to using every faculty of human reason, they could do with some outside assistance.

There aren't many marks of humility in our society anymore. The Lord's Prayer would be missed for this reason (if no other).

This is why a group of committed pray-ers is always present in each chamber when the prayers are read. No one is forced—attendance at the prayers (to acknowledge our heritage and express humility) is always optional.

### **(3) Christianity is still acknowledged as part of Australia's birthright**

While not everyone in Australia is Christian (although more than 52 per cent tell the census they are), nothing changes the fact that Christianity made a significant contribution to making Australia what it is today.

It is a simple fact that Christianity is part of our cultural heritage in a way that other religions are not. This is no disrespect to them. The ethics and ideas of other religions simply did not have the same impact on the formation of western values and the Australian nation.

To discard the prayers at the opening of parliament would be to discard part of our national heritage—like closing down the Don Bradman Museum in Bowral, or bulldozing a 117-year-old Morton Bay Fig tree!

**Yours Sincerely**