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Render unto Caesar

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From: [The Australian](#)

Dear Committee Secretary This email is a part submission to your Inquiry into the Disclosure regimes for charities and not-for-profit. Other material will be emailed and posted.

Max Wallace ANSA

THE Treasury review of tax concessions offered to the \$80billion non-profit sector marks a policy turning point that has been a long time coming. One of the most contentious concessions has been the tax-exempt status of commercial businesses run by religious organisations. This privilege is not conceded in many other comparable liberal democracies.

The questioning of this privilege has occurred sporadically in the past century. In 1905 the Catholic Church was running a commercial laundry at its convent in Sandy Bay, Hobart, an Australian Magdalene laundry. The local council argued that if it was running a business from this site, it should not be exempt from local council rates. The council's attempt to withdraw this privilege failed.

In 1930, Anne Lennon railed against the tax privileges of the churches on her soapbox in the Sydney Domain behind the NSW Parliament House. She was arrested, as the free speech laws we enjoy now were not so liberal then. The Rationalist Association of Australia appealed her case and lost.