

Submission

The Inquiry into the Disclosure regimes for charities and not-for-profit organisations

I wish to address one aspect of the not-for-profit industry - Religious Institutions.

Australians enjoy religious freedom. Approximately 16% of the population classified themselves as having 'no religion', according to the 2001 Census. This is the third largest group after Catholic (27%) and Church of England (21%). The 'no religion' percentage is considered a conservative estimate by many respected commentators due to the wording of the question in the census form.

I submit that "Advancement of Religion" should be removed from the scope of tax exemption.

The various Religions disagree in the spheres where they claim special knowledge; morality and the metaphysical world.

Religions promote a feeling of superiority amongst their adherents to the exclusion of the rest of the community.

I would like to cite a single example of the impropriety of 'the advancement of religion'. The example comes from the recent Catholic World Youth Day (WYD) activities in Sydney.

In the middle of the *Stations of the Cross* performance a prayer was recited. The actor playing Christ had just been raised on his high-tech cross – a charged moment for the millions of people watching around the world.

Here's a quote from the middle of this prayer:

"... that blind atheism that would deprive us of the power of our own faith is itself perhaps the worst violence ..."

In the context of stripping, flogging and crucifixion, a description of a belief, that Man created God, as "the worst violence", constitutes a particularly ugly example of vilification.

WYD was described as a recruitment drive by its organizers. The Catholic Church is an international organization that doesn't pay taxes. In addition to any not-for-profit tax gains WYD enjoyed, it was subsidised by The Federal and NSW Governments. According to Sarah Price in the Sydney Morning Herald, June 22, 2008 "Almighty Cost of Hosting Pilgrims", The Federal Government contribution was \$55 million; The NSW Government - \$108.5 million.

I hope this submission assists in your deliberations.

Peter Robinson