

## Statement by Faith Based Religious Organisations (against the Bill)

We (see logos below) represent a range of community service organisations with a faith background. We come from many different faiths and our organisations are formed, and operate, in different ways.

Our services work with some of Australia's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Those who are homeless, suffer from hunger, loneliness, experience family violence, use drugs and alcohol. We also provide aged care, foster services for children, supports for people with disability and we run opportunity shops.

What unifies us is our focus on community and social service. We work with people where they are at and seek to meet their needs for support in whatever way best works for them. Our services are funded through the community, through Government grants, generous donations and sometimes also through the contribution of our clients.

We respect the diversity of the beliefs held by people who access our services. We offer our hand of friendship and fellowship. While there are people who work in our organisations who have active and meaningful expressions of their faith, many do not.

We are proud of the work we do and are focused on the many needs before us. We believe a divisive national conversation about whether people of faith should be able to discriminate against people of no, or different faiths, is not in the national interest.

Our values require us to question and challenge unjust social structures, which may cause harm and disadvantage, and to advocate for those who do not have a voice in these conversations.

It is our view that the draft Religious Discrimination Bill will allow people and organisations to use faith as a means to cause harm. Religious freedom must be balanced against the rights of all people.

The Government can legislate to protect religious freedom without removing protections from those who need it. We urge the Government not to implement the Religious Discrimination Bill as proposed. Our laws should protect all of us, equally.

