



Friday, 26 November 2021

Your ref:

## MEDIA STATEMENT

Our ref: 2021StatementonReligiousDiscriminationBill

### 2021 - Statement on Religious Discrimination Bill

Pride in Law is a national non-political LGBTIQ+ Law Association, aimed at connecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning (LGBTIQ+) members of the legal community and their allies. Pride in Law is Australia's first and only National LGBTIQ+ Law Association, which is '*Law Focused, Pride Inspired*'.

Since July 2017, Pride in Law has worked to provide visibility, education, and advocacy around LGBTIQ+ issues in the legal profession. We represent and promote legal professionals, increase community understanding of the law, particularly as it affects LGBTIQ+ individuals, help protect the rights of individuals and advise the community about the benefits legal professionals can provide.

It is vital to recognise that LGBTIQ+ people are found in every faith community, and do not simply cease to exist because a particular religious group or faction thereof refuses to acknowledge their presence.

Pride in Law joins members of the Australian LGBTIQ+ community to express grave concerns over the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 ('Bill') introduced into Federal Parliament on 25 November 2021.

If enacted, the Bill will erode fundamental rights that have been hard fought for by minority groups, and will cause direct harm to women, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with a disability and people from minority faith groups.

The Bill, including sections 7 to 9, will override existing State and Territory protections for these groups Australia-wide, allowing discrimination laws to effectively be used as a sword by people of faith against others. Section 15 of the Bill will make it difficult for professional regulatory bodies, for example law societies and medical boards, to respond to or discipline members who make offensive, uninformed, insulting, demeaning or damaging statements based in or about religion outside work contexts. Further, section 11 of the Bill, will permit the Commonwealth Attorney-General to make changes by using regulatory powers.

We should all have the right, whether at work, school, and in healthcare and other essential service settings, to feel safe and respected. The Bill puts employers in precarious positions, where they must navigate on the one hand, a duty of care to provide a safe and inclusive workplace for all employees, and on the other hand, the rights of employees to make "statements of belief" that offend, insult, or humiliate others.

Pride in Law supports members of all faith groups who wish to respectfully practice their faith, but Australian laws should protect all of us, equally. This Bill does not protect religious people or uphold the right to religious freedom. Rather, it enshrines in Australian law the right to discriminate.

We do not support the Bill and call for it to be withdrawn. In the alternative, we recommend that at the very least the Bill be sent to a joint parliamentary committee.

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