



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

MC21-047245

10 December 2021

Ms Tricia Blomberry
stuart_tricia@bigpond.com

Dear Ms Blomberry

Thank you for your letter of 21 November 2021 to the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, regarding the Religious Discrimination Bill. The Attorney-General has requested that the Attorney-General's Department respond to you on her behalf.

The Australian Government believes that all Australians, regardless of their religious belief, should be able to fully participate in our society within the framework of Australian law. The Government recognises that there is an opportunity to further enhance and better protect freedom of religion under Australian law.

For this reason, the Government introduced into Parliament on 25 November 2021 the Religious Discrimination Bill and associated legislation to implement a number of recommendations from the report of the Religious Freedom Review. The Government conducted extensive consultation in developing the legislation and received approximately 13,000 submissions. The views of a wide range of interested stakeholders, including representatives from religious, legal, LGBTIQ and community groups, were considered.

The process of achieving a balance in protecting people from religious discrimination while respecting the rights of others requires a careful and measured approach, as is necessary whenever rights intersect with one another. The Religious Discrimination Bill will ensure that religious belief and activity is protected in the same manner as other existing attributes protected by anti-discrimination law, including race, age, disability and sex.

The legislation has been referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, with both Committees being asked to report by 4 February 2022. The Government invites all interested parties to make submissions to the Committees about this legislation. Further information is available by searching on the Parliament House website at <https://www.aph.gov.au/> for the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry or by contacting: religionbills@aph.gov.au, or by searching for the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry or by contacting: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the Attorney-General's attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Colin Minihan'.

Colin Minihan
Principal Legal Officer
Human Rights Unit