To whom it may concern,

We wish to make known our opposition to this proposed legislation which whilst seeking to protect the human rights of some takes the same rights away from others. It does not strike a proper balance between the two and as proposed will in fact restrict one of the greatest human rights of all, that of freedom of speech.

In its present form it will in all likelihood result in an increase in litigation resulting in a greater degree of angst within the community that is ever caused by people freely expressing their opinions. To think that people will be able to raise legal action against someone who simply "offends" them is abhorrent in our eyes and quite un Australian.

The proposal to reverse the onus of proof in any case that is prosecuted, flies in the face of the long legal tradition of the accused being innocent until proven guilty. It is a dangerous principle that has no place in Australian law.

Organisations with specifically stated and recognised values should not be required to override those values and employ people who do not share
them. To deny them this right is surely to establish in law a breach of their rights as employees. Again this fails to keep the balance between competing interests and denies people and organisations the right to have staff who adhere to their pre-stated and widely known values. One must ask why would anyone want to work for an organisation whose values they do not share, so what of their rights are we trying to protect.

I note an increasing number of those involved within the legal fraternity are also raising concerns from a legal perspective. We believe the legislation that is proposed will do great disservice to Australia as a whole and we urge the Senate Committee to totally reject the legislation and go back to the drawing board.

Brian & Robyn Pickering