To Whom it may concern,

I wish to submit my views for Parliamentary consideration prior to the proposed legislation being passed and enacted into law.

As an Evangelical Christian I experience comments offensive to my deeply held beliefs on a daily basis and in fact many aspects of modern Australian society offend my biblical based Christian sensibilities. Women wearing little clothing, people stating that my beliefs are equivalent to belief in santa Claus or the Easter Bunny, are as offensive to me as sacreligeous, as jokes about the prophet Mohammed are to Muslims.

However, it is a breech of free speech, open to abuse, to outlaw such comments. Should such comments become intensive and repetition for the purpose of e.g. forcing constructive dismissal from work or failure by bosses to address such activity, the victim already has recourse to a host of existing legal protections, including bullying and harrassement and a new law is therefore not required.

Both Islam and Christianity have branches that believe in the divine injunction to proselytise. Prosetylisation implies a belief that those who do not believe are mistaken in their existing belief in either a certain God or gods or no god. This is inherently offensive to the recipient but can equally be ignored /dismissed as a view that the person has that is not universal. The way in which the proselytising is undertaken may be rude and offensive or purely and kindly done in the loving belief that the information being discussed is of eternal importance and value to the recipient. However, this law would leave those being proselytised open to accusations of offending the other person.

Free speech is inherently offensive to anyone who does not hold the same views as you.

I am not advocating that this law should not be considered further with amendments to clarify what exactly constitutes the broad and weak word 'Offense'. Slander, words deliberately designed to stir up racial, religious or political hatred of another person or group, may be a starting point.

I believe that the existing proposed law would be difficult to prove or disprove. One would say your comments offended me and the other will say that was not my intent and am sorry if I offended you unwittingly.

Please reconsider the devastating effect that this law would have on free speech, the danger of the dominant forces n society being the only voice, i.e. godless materialism, or the litany of cases that will ensue when radical elements of any religious group try to use this law to silence all dissenting voices especially.

Yours Sincerely
Paul Russell MSc, MBA, RGN, RMN.