

## **MORE THAN 80 ORGANISATIONS JOINTLY ENDORSE STATEMENT RAISING CONCERNS WITH ONE NATION NSW'S RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION BILL**

October 22, 2020

On the eve of public hearings before a NSW Parliament inquiry, leaders from prominent health bodies, LGBTIQ+ community groups, women's organisations, disability groups, community legal centres, faith-based service providers, unions, religious institutions and other non-government organisations have come together to urge the NSW Parliament not to implement One Nation NSW's Religious Discrimination Bill.

ACON, Western Sydney Community Forum, Diversity Council of Australia, Women With Disabilities Australia, The Foundation for Young Australians, NSW Teachers Federation, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Wagga Women's Health Centre, Uniting NSW/ACT, Unions NSW, NSW Women's Electoral Lobby, and BLAQ Aboriginal Corporation are amongst the more than 80 organisations who have already signed on to the joint statement in opposition to the Bill.

### **[READ THE FULL STATEMENT](#)**

Supporting fair and equal discrimination laws that protect all people, equally, the organisations are concerned that this Bill fails to do so.

Equality Australia CEO, **Anna Brown**, says "This Bill is a threat to hard-won gains for equality. It takes us backwards and threatens inclusion for LGBTIQ+ people, women, and even people of faith. It's important that people of faith are protected from discrimination but that cannot extend to a right to discriminate against anyone else".

The organisations are worried about the impact of the Bill on the provision of crucial services, even when those programs are publicly funded.

**Trent Dean**, CEO of Mercy Connect NSW, a Catholic service provider says "The Bill has the potential to undermine the efforts of faith-based, community service organisations in creating environments which staff feel proud of, and where all clients are assured of inclusion. However, if legislators (and their constituencies) were more willing to consider the values of compassion, hospitality and respect in their thinking, we would then have a better chance of achieving national anti-discrimination protections for people of faith, without removing protections for others".

There are concerns about the impact of the Bill on the right to judgement-free, accessible and safe healthcare, and privileging religious beliefs to the detriment of women, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities and people with different beliefs in workplace, education and service settings.

**Hayley Foster**, Chief Executive Officer of Women's Safety NSW says "Although Women's Safety NSW respects and acknowledges religious freedoms, when it conflicts with such essential human rights, we must weigh up the importance of these, and the way in which they interact and compete with one another. This Bill does not provide an appropriate

balance on this basis, placing religious freedom on a pedestal over the rights of women and girl's health and bodily autonomy.”

The group describe the Bill as divisive, noting their concerns with the double-standards it will create in the law.

“This Bill would undermine the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, by privileging the rights of religious organisations at the expense of others. This is not the way to promote tolerance in our community” says **Jonathon Hunyor**, CEO of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

## **ENDS**

### **Full text of statement**

*Everyone deserves to live, study, and work with dignity, no matter what they believe, who they are, or whom they love.*

*Everyone should be afforded an equal opportunity to access the services and support they need, such as education, housing and healthcare, to realise the best lives they can achieve for themselves and the people they love.*

*Unfortunately, One Nation NSW's Religion Bill fails to protect all of us, equally.*

*The Bill allows religion to be used as an excuse to hurt, exclude and demean others, including other people of faith.*

*The Bill makes it harder for employers, educators, and professional and licencing bodies to foster inclusive cultures and protect their employees, customers and clients from harmful conduct motivated by one person's beliefs.*

*Conduct that is unlawful or even criminal today, could also be protected in the name of the religion.*

*The Bill also privileges institutions over people, by setting standards for others to meet which those institutions are not willing nor required to meet themselves.*

*The One Nation NSW Religion Bill seeks to divide our communities; it creates double standards in our laws. For this reason, we oppose the Bill and call for fair and equal discrimination laws which protect all of us, including people of faith and those who are not religious, equally alongside other groups.*

### **Full list of organisations who have signed on to the statement**

1. ACON
2. Amnesty International Australia
3. ARC UNSW Student Representative Council Welfare Collective
4. Asian Australian Alliance & Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance
5. Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists (AABCAP)

6. Australian Association of Social Workers
7. Australian Catholics for Equality
8. Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)
9. Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council
10. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights
11. Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, NSW/ACT Branch
12. Australian Sangha Association (ASA)
13. Australian Services Union NSW Branch
14. BLAQ Aboriginal Corporation
15. Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF)
16. Buddhist Council of NSW
17. Christ Church Cathedral, Grafton
18. Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
19. Community Legal Centres NSW
20. Diversity Council Australia (DCA)
21. Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW)
22. DV West
23. Dying with Dignity NSW
24. Equal Voices
25. Equality Australia
26. Fair Agenda
27. Family Planning NSW
28. First Mardi Gras Inc.
29. Foundation for Young Australians
30. HIV/AIDS Legal Centre
31. Human Rights Law Centre
32. Hunter Community Legal Centre
33. Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC)
34. Independent Education Union of Australia, NSW/ACT Branch
35. Inner City Legal Centre
36. Intersex Human Rights Australia
37. Justice Connect
38. Kingsford Legal Centre
39. Marathon Health
40. Marrickville Legal Centre
41. Mercy Connect NSW
42. National LGBTI Health Alliance
43. North & Northwest Community Legal Service
44. NSW Council for Civil Liberties
45. NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
46. NSW Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby
47. NSW Teachers Federation
48. People With Disability Australia (PWDA)
49. Physical Disability Council NSW (PDCN)
50. Positive Life NSW
51. Public Health Association Australia
52. Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)
53. Rainbodhi LGBTQIA+ Buddhist Community

54. Rainbow Catholic InterAgency for Ministry
55. Rainbow Families
56. Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia
57. Rationalist Association of NSW
58. Rationalist Society of Australia
59. Redfern Legal Centre
60. Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS)
61. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZGOG)
62. Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
63. South West Sydney Legal Centre
64. Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)
65. Sydney Arco Iris Latin American and Hispanic Community (SAILAHC)
66. Sydney Atheists
67. Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
68. Sydney Queer Irish
69. Sydney Queer Muslims
70. Tenants' Union of New South Wales
71. The Atheist Foundation Of Australia
72. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
73. Tropical Fruits
74. Unions NSW
75. Uniting Church of Australia, Synod of NSW & ACT
76. Uniting Network NSW/ACT
77. Uniting NSW/ACT
78. Uniting Vic/Tas
79. Vegan NSW
80. Wagga Women's Health Centre
81. Western Sydney Community Forum
82. Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
83. Women's Health NSW
84. Women's Electoral Lobby NSW
85. Women's Legal Service NSW
86. Women's Safety NSW
87. Yes Unlimited
88. Youth Action
89. YWCA Australia

For any media related to the statement and its signatories, please contact:

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Equality Australia

