

The Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane QLD 4000

Re: Human Rights Enquiry Submission (Queensland)

Free speech

Free speech is absolutely fundamental to democracy and egalitarianism. It must be uninhibited in every way. We already have libel and slander laws for people who believe they have been aggrieved by another's expressed views.

Provided a view or opinion is sincerely believed and expressed, or it is believed it is necessary or useful to express for whatever reason eg including views about any deity, any ethnic group or member of a national group, or any behaviour, or any trend or object; it should be able to be expressed.

Whether an expression of a view results in feelings of hurt, or disagreement, or rejection, or disapproval, or challenge, or embarrassment, or rethinking of another's beliefs – long standing or otherwise - in no way diminishes any person's rights to free expression.

The reaction of a person hearing another person express their views, is a personal matter and results from a vast array of experience, thinking, feelings, assumptions etc of their own, that in no way should inhibit the right of anyone to speak freely. Such reactions to other speech are the business and responsibility of the hearer, not the speaker. Such reactions might be based upon or caused by erroneous thinking, poor information, a lack of experience, previously unquestioned assumptions, unique experience not shared by others, and may be right or wrong. They are never caused by hearing speech – they reside within the listener, they are part of the listener. The holding of such feelings or views never justifies diminution of the right of others to free expression.

Dissent is fundamental to democracy and freedom. Scepticism is also fundamental to democracy and freedom, and both are necessary in scientific methodology. Any freely expressed view can be rejected by any listener – on whatever basis they want. Free speech doesn't come with a guarantee that others will agree. The free expression of scepticism and dissent applies equally to those exercising their right to free speech as well as anyone who wishes to reply.

Further, the reality is that what we say usually reflects a great deal about ourselves, and we carry the burden of people making judgements about us, whenever we reveal ourselves through speaking publicly. If our speech content or tone is wrong, or hurtful, or malicious – this reflects accordingly upon us – as the speaker. We own our thoughts. But obviously if we have evidence based upon scientific methodology that can be tested, our case in terms of the content of our speech is stronger and our credibility will be enhanced by those who respect scientific methodology. Of course many still don't respect scientific methodology, on the basis of superstition (religion), emotion, hunch,

intuition, custom etc. That is their prerogative. But it doesn't come with censorial rights in a free, secular democracy, such as ours.

It is well understood within the science of psychotherapy (Gestalt Psychology) that part of mental health and recovery includes 'owning' ones emotions. Emotions arise from our inner self, reflecting our experience, our own thinking and interpretations of our self and others and the world in which we live. The world at large is not responsible for individual or shared (group) emotions – no matter how they were acquired or how many people share them or how strongly they are felt. We all have to own our own emotions whether palatable or not. If we want to change them, that is a matter for psychotherapy or whatever other devices people believe will work; not the censorship of others.

Rudeness is a matter of manners. It is part of diplomacy and influencing people. If people cease to recognise established principles of diplomacy or manners, that is their problem. They risk their capacity to influence others and the respect of others. That is no grounds for curbing in any way freedom of expression. The banning or prohibition of freedom of expression is a form of bullying whereby one group of people control by artifice of law, the expressions of others. This has no place in a democratic, egalitarian culture.

In fact as scientific understanding of our history, human nature and the universe continues to evolve, any inhibition of the human expression of views, ideas, hypotheses, opinions and claims of discovery or evidence; risks undermining the revelation of truth and our grasp upon reality. Science may not be perfect, but is far outweighs any other means we have.

Submitted to email address: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Sincerely,

Alan Harrison

17.04.16

From: [Alan Harrison](#)
To: [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)
Subject: Submission on human rights (Qld)
Date: Sunday, 17 April 2016 12:59:38 PM
Attachments: [Human Rights Enquiry Submission Qld free speech.docx](#)

The Research Director,

Please see attached my submission to your HR enquiry. Any follow up clarifications etc can be made by return e mail or phone 0427 427 400.

Thank you and regards,
Alan Harrison