

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 25 November 2018 6:19 PM
To: Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Subject: Human Rights Bill 2018 - request for clarifying amendment

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Human Rights Bill 2018.

I believe the formal recognition and codification of human rights forms the basis for a fair and equitable society and passing human rights into law is necessary to achieve this to the fullest extent.

I support the content of the draft Bill, bar the following reservation.

Section 20 Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief

The word 'belief' is not defined in the Bill; however, I believe it should be clearly defined as including 'non-religious beliefs'. It would be a simple, yet extremely important, matter to provide clarity and avoid any uncertainty to clearly elucidate that non-religious beliefs have equal protection to religious beliefs. If the intent of the bill is to lay down that all people have equal rights, it is not sufficient to itemize religious beliefs, as if they demand special consideration, and ignore the right to freedom of conscience and belief of the ever-growing number of non-religious members of society. This cannot be more heart-wrenchingly illustrated by circumstances in other countries where non-believers are persecuted for proclaiming a lack of faith. Even in a nominally secular nation such as Bangladesh we have seen the murder of atheist bloggers not only going unpunished, but the government suggesting in statements that the victims brought their fate on themselves. While I am in no way suggesting that this scenario is a possibility in Queensland, it underpins the importance of putting down in black and white that non-religious worldviews have equal recognition and protection via instruments of law if all citizens are to truly be considered equal.

I understand that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights does refer to non-religious beliefs and that this has led to uncertainty and differing opinions of signatories to the Convention. Surely it is better to learn from the shortcomings of other instruments and get this Bill right from the outset, positioning it as an example of 'what to do', rather than deal with issues of interpretation at a later date that could have been avoided.

To give effect to the human rights to be granted by passing of the Bill, there should also be included an avenue for people to make a complaint to a tribunal or a court which can make an enforceable decision and award damages for breach of the person's human rights. If we think human rights are important enough to legislate them, we must be able to enforce those rights in a way consistent with other laws.

Subject to the above observations, I support the Human Rights Bill.

Yours faithfully

Julia Mizuno
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