

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Freedom of Speech Bill a Risk to Dignity and Safety

The AASW has called on the Federal government to reject the Freedom of Speech Bill 2014 in its entirety.

In a submission lodged with the Attorney-General, in response to the Freedom of Speech (repeal of s.18C) Bill 2014, the AASW has called for the Bill to be rejected and recommended further public consultation occurs to ensure a healthy and informed debate on this important human rights issue.

The AASW's submission highlights the weakness of evidence to support the proposed changes.

The submission also stresses that to pass this Bill would be to condone verbal and written racism and therefore increase levels of physical, psychological and social harm that will have long-term consequences for the health and wellbeing of many Australians.

The AASW values free speech and the expression of a range of views that reflects the rich diversity that is Australia. The AASW also values an individual's right to human dignity and to feel safe in their community. The Freedom of Speech bill swings too far in favour of free speech at the expense of human dignity and safety.

The AASW believes the current Racial Discrimination Act 1975 is working well, strikes the right balance between freedom of speech and protecting human dignity and should be retained.

The AASW represents 7500 professional social workers who see daily the impacts of racism on the health and wellbeing of too many Australians, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and recent migrants.

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