

# MEDIA RELEASE

THURSDAY 1 MAY 2014

## **RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT**

The Victorian Multicultural Commission has made a full submission to the Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis QC, with its views on the proposed changes to Part IIA of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

The Commission believes that Part IIA of the Act should not be repealed or amended. It is unnecessary and threatens Australia's cultural harmony and the human rights of its multicultural communities.

The exposure draft proposes that the words 'offend', 'insult' and 'humiliate' be removed from the Act. The removal of these words could make it easier for persons to publish false and insulting information without redress.

The current law as it stands provides the right balance between free speech and the rights of citizens to be free from racially vilified language. To repeal Part IIA could unintentionally send a message to the community that hate speech is acceptable and may increase intolerance towards minorities.

A majority of the Australian community supports the protections afforded by the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. The current provisions send a strong message that Australia is committed to its multicultural values and the protection of human rights for all its citizens.

As our culturally diverse population continues to grow, there has never been a more important time to ensure there are protections against hate speech based on race, ethnicity or religion.

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