



Media release

The Hon Matthew Guy MLC

Minister for Planning

Minister for Multicultural Affairs & Citizenship

Thursday 27 March 2014

Minister vows to protect Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities from discrimination

Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Matthew Guy today confirmed the Victorian Coalition Government's enduring support for the state's multicultural diversity, in light of proposed Federal Government amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act.

On Tuesday 25 March 2014, the Federal Government released its exposure draft proposing changes to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, to address what it regards as an unnecessary limitation on free speech.

The proposed changes would seek to repeal Section 18C of the Act, which makes it unlawful to publicly act in a way that is reasonably likely to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" others on the basis of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin.

Minister Guy said he shared the concerns expressed within many of Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities about the amendments proposed in the draft.

"Freedom of speech is a cornerstone of our democratic society, and must be defended. However, we must also ensure that this does not come at the expense of protections against acts of discrimination, hatred and vilification. The right balance needs to be met to safeguard the rights of all members of our society," Mr Guy said.

Mr Guy said that successive Victorian Governments have demonstrated bipartisan support for the state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and for promoting social cohesion and harmony across the community.

"We recognise that our cultural and religious diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and that all governments share an obligation to protect and encourage social cohesion," Mr Guy said.

Mr Guy said that the potential for changes to Commonwealth legislation to impact or override state legislation meant the proposed amendments were "of utmost importance to Victoria."

"The Victorian Government remains unambiguously opposed to any form of discrimination based on an individual's race, faith, gender, or for any other reason. We will be making a submission to the Commonwealth Government regarding Victoria's position on the proposed amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975," Mr Guy said.

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