

JCCV Wants to Maintain Protections against Hate Speech

31 March 2014

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) is deeply concerned about the Exposure Draft of proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

Freedom of speech is a very important right but not an absolute right. It is limited for good reason in several areas, such as defamation, libel and sexual discrimination, as well as racial discrimination.

Nina Bassat AM, President of the JCCV said in response to the exposure draft that, "hate speech based on race, ethnicity or religion should be deplored and all members of society should be protected from it. Just as freedom of speech should be valued, so should the right of people to be part of a free and fair society without suffering the emotional and mental damage caused by hate speech."

"We believe that the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) as it stands has been working well and is effective in creating an environment that supports multiculturalism and a harmonious Victorian community. We also believe that the protections it provides and the avenues it opens to conciliation are critical to a society that can see things from the perspective of the vulnerable and less powerful."

"The current legislation has also been very useful in helping to remove hate speech in the online world. We would not like to see this removed."

"Racial and religious intolerance, vilification, incitement of hatred and intimidation are lines that should not be crossed."

"This is not just a Jewish issue or an Aboriginal issue, but an issue for all members of society. Over the past few months we have been involved with 35 other ethnic, community and faith organisations in issuing statements expressing our concerns about the potential watering down of the RDA."

"We appreciate the support and welcome the statements from Matthew Guy MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and David Southwick MP, Member for Caulfield against the watering down of the RDA."

"The JCCV will be evaluating all aspects of the Exposure Draft and we plan to work with the ECAJ on a submission to the Attorney-General, as well as working with other communities to help express our concerns."

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