

MEDIA RELEASE

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Religious Discrimination Bill is bad for women

The largest alliance of women's groups in Australia, the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), has expressed alarm about the prospect of the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2021*, in its latest form, becoming law.

"The Bill winds back protections for women and girls," says ERA convenor Helen Dalley-Fisher.

"It pits the freedom of a person to put their beliefs into action against the right of women and girls to be free from discrimination."

"This Bill is capable of protecting sexist, racist and other discriminatory statements as long as they constitute a religious belief and are politely or benevolently expressed, no matter how serious the outcome to the person affected."

"This Bill also contradicts positive steps the Federal Government is taking to implement two breakthrough reports on workplace safety by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, *Respect@Work* and *Set the Standard*."

"One of the biggest barriers to gender equality is tackling unconscious bias and discriminatory norms and cultures. The *Religious Discrimination Bill* will provide protection to people who express views which contribute to sexist cultures in workplaces and in our communities."

Tomorrow (Friday, January 21) the Equality Rights Alliance will appear before a public hearing of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee looking into [the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and associated bills](#).

ERA has been invited to appear on a panel alongside Diversity Council Australia, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Harmony Alliance, People with Disability Australia and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia.

"Protecting the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief does not have to happen at the expense of other rights," says Ms Dalley-Fisher.

"ERA is strongly in favour of the domestic implementation of all international human rights instruments ratified by Australia, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as articulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," she added.

*For more information or an interview please call **Helen Dalley-Fisher: 0413 065 822***

[Equality Rights Alliance](#) (ERA) is Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality, women's leadership and recognition of women's diversity. We bring together 66 non-government organisations and social enterprises with a focus on the impact of policy or service delivery on women.

Equality Rights Alliance is one of six [National Women's Alliances](#). We are funded by the [Commonwealth Government's Office for Women](#) and are led by [YWCA Australia](#)

ERA believes the advancement of women and the achievement of equality are matters of fundamental human rights. We advocate for gender equality, women's leadership and government policy responses that support women's diversity. Using a range of methods to consult and engage with women in Australia, ERA works to bring the voices of women from diverse life situations to policy makers.