

Joint media statement

Thursday 6 May 2021

New rules would target charities: Church providers speak out

The leaders of major faith-based charities have come together against changes that would target charities. The changes will mean that charities could be targeted and shut down for subjective reasons.

“Our work is driven by our mission. But these new rules would make it harder for us to advocate for our mission,” said Rt Rev Dr Chris Jones, Chair of Anglicare Australia.

“We could be targeted if our staff or volunteers commit minor offences. We could be held responsible for how other people use our materials. We could even be shut down if the Commissioner thinks it’s ‘more likely than not’ that we’ll do something wrong.”

“Baptist Care Australia are concerned that these proposed changes limit the capacity for charities to undertake legitimate and lawful advocacy. The breadth of their application to include such subjective measures as a ‘belief’ that they ‘may’ commit a minor offence is totally unreasonable,” said Nicole Hornsby, Executive Director of Baptist Care Australia.

“The administrative burden of monitoring all our activities is enormous and not warranted. Unlawful acts are already covered by existing criminal law. These changes increase red-tape for no good reason,” said Toby oConnor, CEO of the St Vincent Paul Society National Council of Australia.

“Rules like these would be unthinkable for businesses, but they are the latest in a long line of attacks on charities. We’re calling on the Government to abandon these changes and support us in our work – helping Australians in need,” said Dr Jones.

This joint statement is issued by UnitingCare Australia, the St Vincent Paul Society National Council of Australia, Baptist Care Australia, and Anglicare Australia.

The Government’s changes to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations are expected to be introduced in the coming months. An explainer on the changes is attached.

Media contact: Maiy Azize, 0434 200 794