



MEDIA RELEASE

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LIBERALS DIVIDED OVER GOVERNMENT PLAN TO CENSOR CHARITIES

A bi-partisan committee of the Australian Senate has slammed the Morrison Government's attempts to target and shut down charities for advocating on behalf of the communities they represent.

A united front of more than 100 of Australia's hard-working charities have welcomed the moral leadership of the [Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation](#), which has recommended the Government's charity-busting regulation be disallowed.

Chaired by Liberal Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, the Committee has recommended overturning the Morrison Government's anti-charity attack in when parliament resumes in October, saying:

"The committee's significant scrutiny concerns regarding the conferral of broad discretionary powers on the ACNC commissioner and the impact of the instrument on the implied constitutional freedom of political communication."

The Government's regulation, which Prime Minister Morrison's own Senators are against, grants the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission power to investigate and deregister any group.

The report by a Liberal chaired Senate oversight committee questioning these new anti-charity regulations is further proof that the regulations go too far and should be disallowed.

"This Committee has backed what we have been saying for months – the Government's new rules attack charities, and democracy, in an unprecedented way," **Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.**

"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 all Senators to vote to scrap these changes and support charities in our work – building a better Australia," said Ms Chambers.

"This has been a proposed regulation in search of a problem that would only serve to tie up charities in red tape and waste valuable public donations. The scrutiny committee has unanimously rejected it. Now it's time for the Senate to finally put a stop to this regressive measure," **Oxfam Australia Chief Executive Lyn Morgain said.**

"Amnesty is really pleased the Committee has seen sense in the face of this completely unwarranted attack on Australian charities. Undermining our ability to advocate and hold those in power to account is what our millions of supporters - Australian taxpayers - want us to do and we should be free to do it," **Amnesty International Australia National Director, Sam Klintworth said.**

"It's a key role of charities to advocate for those who don't have a voice," **The Fred Hollows Foundation CEO Ian Wishart said.**

"These laws limit the ability of charities to raise important issues and hold people in power to account. They have no place anywhere in the world, let alone Australia, where freedom of assembly and political participation, and basic human rights, are the cornerstone of our democratic society.

"The scrutiny committee's recommendation is a step in the right direction, and we now call on the Prime Minister and all Senators to scrap these changes."

“Charities have always been a voice for the voiceless. We have been there to champion the rights of the disadvantaged and provided care when others could not,” **UnitingCare Australia National Director, Claerwen Little said.**

“We are encouraged by the support of Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and the Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation to motion to disallow the changed and allow us to do what we do best without fear of unknowingly breaking the rules.”

“The findings of the senate committee are important recognition of the vital role played by charities in a health democracy, Charities are on the ground supporting people in need. We also have an obligation to speak up and advocate for changes need to make Australia a fairer, more decent society for all,” **ACOSS CEO, Cassandra Goldie said.**

The fact that our 100 plus organisations can come together collegially, with a single purpose and common cause, while respecting our differences is an exemplar of how Australian society can function.

During COVID, Australian Charities have been working harder than ever to support struggling Australians who are falling through the cracks, and part of this is through vital advocacy work.

Our member charities and advocacy groups are hardworking and dedicated people that span every cultural, social and economic divide. Many of them are divided on almost every social issue – except this.

It is vital that all Senators reflect on this damning report from a Liberal-led committee and move to disallow this regrettable regulation which stifles free speech in Australia.

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