

10 April, 2018

WHY PROCEED TO GAG CHARITIES?

In response to the Majority report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the CEO of Caritas Australia, Paul O'Callaghan, has urged the Federal Government to redraft the Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform Bill and for a proper consultation process to be initiated.

“Caritas strongly supports the Committee’s efforts to clamp down on foreign interference in our political process. However, the Majority report fails to recognise the fundamentally chilling impact that even a modified Bill, as recommended, would have”, said Paul O'Callaghan.

“There is no doubt that it would constrain the voice of Australia’s civil society in public policy discourse now and in the future.”

“We have been one of a small number of countries with a proud tradition of allowing vibrant debate about public policy matters of all sorts. This goes back to our nation’s Federation in 1901,” he said.

“Through this legislation Australia looks set to join those countries actively stifling civil society engagement in public debate. Why would we risk undermining our democracy and ability to effectively tackle non-partisan issues such as homelessness, mental health, disability, housing, overseas aid and related matters?”

“We need to ensure that our children and young people inherit an open, vibrant democracy where evidence-based ideas and proposals from thousands of charities can be routinely presented without State intervention”.

Paul O'Callaghan is available for interviews.

Caritas media contact: Nicole Clements on 0408 869 833 or nicolec@caritas.org.au or Susan Duric on 0407 536 130 or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au.