



6 August 2017

ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP RESPONSE TO PROPOSED MARRIAGE AMENDMENT (DEFINITION AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS) BILL 2017

The proposed marriage amendment bill released today will not protect the religious freedom of the Australian people.

The limited protections offered to ministers of religion and those already registered as civil celebrants evidences an incorrect assumption that freedom of religion is simply a matter for those engaged in religious ministry.

The free exercise of religion is a right afforded to every Australian, and a law which does not protect religious freedom for all people does not protect religious freedom at all.

Most, by far of the members of Australia's faith and religious organisations are not ministers of religion. This bill provides little comfort for them.

The report of the Senate Select Committee on marriage redefinition and religious freedom earlier this year called for broad protections for religious freedom. I find it extraordinary that those members of parliament putting forward this bill, who claim that religious freedom is central to it, have ignored the report preferring to have only a narrow number of exemptions for a small number of people.

If passed, a bill like this would have grave consequences for all people of faith. I urge all Members of Parliament to take seriously their responsibility to protect the religious freedoms of all Australians equally and not just clerics like me.

Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY