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For immediate release

NOT ALL CHRISTIANS THINK ALIKE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Uniting Church in Australia has written to all federal ALP MPs and Senators, urging them to implement the recommendations made in the report of the National Human Rights Consultation.

In its submission to the Consultation, the Uniting Church articulated its commitment to social justice and the achievement of human dignity for all through a Human Rights Act.

National Director of UnitingJustice Australia, Rev. Elenie Poulos, said that a number of Christian groups also made submissions to the Consultation in support of an Act.

However, she said some religious groups were unsupportive of an Act, concerned that it would erode the rights of religious organisations.

“We are concerned that recent attention given to those opposing a Human Rights Act does not accurately represent the views of the entire religious community in Australia,” Rev. Poulos said.

“It is our firm belief that it is entirely possible to draft legislation that properly and appropriately protects religious freedoms. In fact, such legislation would provide protections for religious freedoms that are currently missing from Commonwealth Law.”

Rev. Poulos said that the Uniting Church’s support of a Human Rights Act rests on the importance of providing protections to the most vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged in the Australian community; those who currently have few avenues for remedy when their rights are violated.

“The Church is privileged enough to be able to negotiate for itself what matters to its future wellbeing. There are too many people who do not share such privilege and they are the ones who we are most concerned for.”

Rev. Poulos also said that it was naïve to assume that all Christian and religious bodies would take the same view.

“There are many issues about which individuals or groups of individuals take a different view to others, and this issue is no exception.

“But while the Uniting Church in Australia is the only church to officially support the development of a Human Rights Act, it is important to stress that we are not the only Christian group which has taken such a position.”

President of the Uniting Church, Rev. Alistair Macrae, will speak to the church’s strong commitment to human rights at a cross-party Parliamentary Forum, *Protecting human rights in Australia: A Human Rights Act and other options?*, being held this Wednesday 25 November.

Rev. Poulos and Rev. Macrae are available to comment.