

Statements

Thursday, 10th February 2022

Statement on Religious Discrimination Legislation

Labor believes all Australians have the right to live their lives free of discrimination.



Parliament this week had an opportunity to extend anti-discrimination protections to more Australians. We had an opportunity to move the country forward in the spirit of our Australian values of inclusion and respect.

But this afternoon, the Morrison-Joyce Government put its Religious Discrimination legislation on indefinite hiatus, breaking a commitment the Prime Minister made before the 2019 election.

Labor believes all Australians have the right to live their lives free of discrimination.

We will seek to enhance protections in a way that brings Australians together, drawing on the bonds of our common humanity.

We don't want to see anyone treated unfairly. We are a diverse nation and we need to respect every Australian for who they are.

Sadly, discrimination on the basis of faith is all too real.

It might be a Muslim woman or a Sikh man being vilified on the streets because of what they are wearing. It might be a group of Jewish or Christian students being attacked because of their faith.

Labor is committed to ending this vilification and discrimination.

In doing so we must not diminish protections for other people in our society.

That is what good legislation would have done.

Instead, the flawed legislation offered by the Morrison-Joyce Government was produced at the last minute, and failed to deliver on commitments the Prime Minister made to protect children.

Labor was successful in amending the legislation to prohibit discrimination against school children because of who they are. This is a critical step towards ensuring their ongoing protection.

It is extraordinary that the Prime Minister has walked away from his commitment to extend anti-discrimination laws by not debating the legislation in the Senate today.

As a result of this Government's decisions, it appears this legislation will not proceed.

A future Labor government will:

- prevent discrimination against people of faith, including anti-vilification protections;
- act to protect all students from discrimination on any grounds; and,
- protect teachers from discrimination at work, whilst maintaining the right of religious schools to preference people of their faith in the selection of staff.