

10 April 2025

The Right Reverend Dr Michael Stead and co-signatories
Bishop of South Sydney
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Dear Faith Leaders

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister of 12 March 2025.

Over the last three years, Labor has greatly valued our engagement with faith communities – including in relation to the social, economic and environmental challenges facing our country.

If re-elected, the Albanese Government will continue to work closely with Australians from different faith traditions, backgrounds and perspectives.

Labor is committed to working towards a nation where no Australian is held back and no Australian is left behind – a nation where no one is discriminated against because of who they are or what they believe.

Legal protections for people of faith will not go backwards under Labor.

To the contrary, Labor has long supported an *expansion* of the federal anti-discrimination framework to ensure that Australians are not discriminated against because of their religious beliefs or activities.

That is why, consistent with Labor's longstanding commitment, we developed draft legislation to:

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

In developing this legislation, we sought to extend protections to more Australians, including people of faith, without removing or overriding any existing protections.

We continue to believe that these reforms should be progressed on a bipartisan basis to ensure they are enduring, unifying and fit-for-purpose. We consulted closely with leaders, advocates and experts from across the community in good faith – to build consensus and bring Australians from different faiths and backgrounds together.

Unfortunately, when it came to engaging with Peter Dutton and the Coalition on our draft legislation, they did not engage constructively. They did not offer in-principle support – even to those aspects of the legislation that were identical to the Religious Discrimination Bill introduced by the Morrison Government in 2021 – let alone suggest any amendments.

We note that the Australian Greens and a number of cross-benchers urged the Albanese Government to force the legislation through the Senate without bipartisan support. However, we believe that only a long-term solution, with support from across the Parliament, will advance protections for all Australians in a way that is enduring, and in a way that brings Australians together.

Your letter also refers to the importance of free speech.

Labor believes all Australians have the right to exercise their freedom of speech, while allowing others to live in dignity, and free from violence or the threat of violence. No Australian should be targeted because of who they are or what they believe.

Conduct that urges or threatens the use of force or violence against individuals or groups in a manner which impacts their enjoyment of fundamental human rights and participation in society is not a legitimate expression of opinion.

On 6 February 2025, the Albanese Labor Government legislated Australia's toughest ever laws against hate crimes. These laws target the most serious forms of hate speech by introducing new criminal offences for advocating or threatening damage to property, including places of worship.

We are taking action to keep the community safe and ensure that people are free to live their lives safely and freely.

We will continue to work across the community to foster respect, understanding and inclusion across all communities that contribute to our vibrant and resilient multicultural society.

We look forward to working with you and other faith leaders in the future.

Yours sincerely

ALP Campaign 2025