

**Public Affairs Commission
Anglican Church of Australia
c/- Convenor
St Peter's Cathedral,
27 King William Rd,
North Adelaide, SA 5006**

25 September 2015

**Mr Tim Wilson
Human Rights Commissioner
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001**

Dear Commissioner,

Religious Freedom Roundtable

I am writing on behalf of the Public Affairs Commission (PAC) of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA). The PAC is a body which advises the Primate and General Synod Standing Committee of the ACA on matters of public concern and to enable comment on public issues.

At a recent meeting we noted that you have called for submissions for Religious Freedom Roundtable which you will be convening in November this year. We have noted that in making this call, you have indicated particular interest in receiving feedback on the following issues:

- Government laws and regulations that limit the right to religious freedom.
- Preserving religious freedom when an organisation receives taxpayer's money to provide a public service.
- Balancing the right to religious freedom and equality before the law – what are the areas of shared agreement?
- Developing mechanisms to support religious inclusion and social cohesion.

Considering these points, we determined that we should resubmit a submission made in 2008 by the Anglican Church of Australia to the Australian Human Rights Commission on "Freedom of Religion and Belief in the 21st Century." As we believe that submission continues to speak with relevance to all of the above issues. For your information, that submission was drafted by a sub-committee of the Public Affairs Commission with the facilitation of Garth Blake.

Of relevance to the current process is also the following resolution passed on 1 July 2014 by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia:

Human Rights – moved by Bishop Robert Forsyth, seconded by Dr Karin Sowada

That the General Synod:

- (i) Affirms the importance of freedom of religion and its manifestation in the related freedoms of speech, association and conscience for a healthy and mature society; and
- (ii) Declaring its opinion that such freedoms are at risk of being undermined in Australian society due to a focus on other, sometimes competing, rights, calls on the Federal, State and Territory governments to take steps to ensure that the freedoms of religion, speech, association and conscience are protected, strengthened and promoted; and
- (iii) Calls on the Federal Government to continue its advocacy of such freedoms internationally through diplomatic channels and other appropriate instruments of global engagement; and
- (iv) Respectfully request the Primate to convey the above terms of this resolution to the Prime Minister, the Premiers of the States, the Chief Ministers of the Territories and their respective Attorneys General.

The General Synod is effectively the national 'parliament' of the Anglican Church of Australia with representatives from around Australia. It meets every three or four years, so this resolution was passed at the most recent Synod. The Standing Committee is the committee responsible for affairs of the General Synod between meetings.

I provide this information additional to the attached submission, by way of indicating that our submission to this current enquiry may be considered to speak, not just on behalf of the PAC, but of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia.

We would be happy to enter into further dialogue on this matter should the Commission so desire; and would also be keen to participate in the forthcoming Round Table process.

Yours faithfully,



**Hon Rev Dr Lynn Arnold AO
Chairperson,
Public Affairs Commission
Anglican Church of Australia**

Att: 2008 Submission to AHRC enquiry into Freedom of Religion and Belief in C21

