

17 August 2018

MEDIA RELEASE: Queensland, South Australian, Victorian, Tasmanian, ACT, Western Australian, New South Wales and Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioners reject racist policies espoused by Queensland Senator.

Commissioners from a number of Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity agencies across Australia have condemned Queensland Senator Fraser Anning's call for the final solution to a perceived immigration problem in Australia, made in his maiden speech in the Australian Federal Parliament on 14 August 2018.

Acting Commissioner Neroli Holmes (Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission), Dr Niki Vincent (Commissioner Equal Opportunity South Australia), Commissioner Kristen Hilton (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission), Commissioner Sarah Bolt (Tasmania Equal Opportunity Commission), Acting President and Discrimination Commissioner Karen Toohey (ACT Human Rights Commission), Dr John Byrne (A/Commissioner, Western Australia Equal Opportunity Commission) President Dr Annabelle Bennett (NSW Anti-Discrimination Board) and Commissioner Sally Seivers (Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission) today rejected Senator Anning's call for a return to the White Australia policy of the 1950s.

Race discrimination and racial vilification is unlawful under our Federal, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation. Many years ago our respective Parliaments, representing the peoples of our states and territories passed laws prohibiting policies that separate, divide and discriminate against people on the basis of race.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental right and public discussion done reasonably and in good faith is part of our democracy. However, public acts that incite hatred towards a group of people on the basis of their religion or race can undermine an inclusive community. We reject outright Senator Anning's offensive and untrue statements about migrants, and about members of our community from the Muslim faith.

Australians, including those residing in our States and Territories are culturally diverse, vibrant, fair minded and inclusive people who value peace, freedom, democracy and the value of a fair go for all.

Migration has greatly contributed to Australia's success as a nation both culturally and economically, and racism has no part in contributing to that story of success. Our Muslim community have and continue to contribute greatly to Australia's success as a modern, adaptive, forward looking and creative society.

We reject the Senator's claim that cultural diversity undermines social cohesion, and that Muslims fail to integrate into Australian society.

Research conducted in 2017 shows that most Australians:

- agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia (85%)
- disagreed that migrants should be rejected based on religion (74%).

- agreed that their local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together (76.1%)
- see the value to Australia of immigrants from many different countries as positive (63%).

-ENDS