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## Stronger vilification laws for Queensland

The Queensland Human Rights Commission welcomes the passage of stronger vilification and hate crime laws through state parliament last night.

The Criminal Code (Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 was passed with bipartisan support following multiple consultation processes and advocacy from across Queensland's diverse communities.

The reforms will strengthen protections and enable police to better address serious online vilification by increasing the penalty for existing offences, making it easier for police to get warrants for online vilification, and banning the display of hate symbols.

Stronger vilification laws for Queensland have been championed by the Cohesive Communities Coalition, representing more than 20 of the state's diverse religious and ethnic communities and bringing their experiences of vilification and hate crimes to the fore.

Their #BetterLaws4SafeQld campaign was launched in 2020, in the wake of the devastating Christchurch massacre and rising public hostility towards some ethnic groups during the COVID pandemic. Throughout the campaign there have been numerous further examples of its need, including the debate over the Voice referendum and the extreme escalation of conflict in Palestine and Israel which risks giving rise to racial and religious vilification here at home.

Possible further changes to vilification law which were raised during the parliamentary inquiry process include broadening the protections to people with other attributes – for example, age or disability.

The government has indicated these suggestions will be considered as part of its commitment to overhaul the state's anti-discrimination laws in this term of parliament, following the Queensland Human Rights Commission's *Building Belonging* report released last year.

In-principle support has been given to all 46 of the report's recommendations.

### Quotes attributable to Scott McDougall, Queensland Human Rights Commissioner:

- I am both pleased and relieved to see stronger vilification laws pass through Queensland's parliament today, and particularly to see them pass with such strong bipartisan support.
- Legislation is not the cure for every ill but it can take us in the right direction, especially when there is collective political will to build public support for positive change.
- The importance of having strong laws to support social cohesion has been highlighted by recent events including the impact of the referendum debate on First Nations people, particularly those exposed to unfiltered material on social media.

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