

Letter Template on Religious Freedom Issues to Raise with your MP

Religious freedom was a key issue in the recent Federal Election and the media, together with MP's of both major parties, have recognised that something must be done to protect it. The Religious Freedom Review (Ruddock Report, 5/2018) has confirmed what many already knew - that we have no clear legal protection of religious freedom in Australia.

There has never been a better time to directly contact MP's about religious freedom; especially Labor MP's. It was a key issue in the re-election of the Morrison government and all MP's realise this now.

Template Letter on Religious Freedom

- To the Prime Minister
- To your local Federal MP
- To your State/ Territory Senators

Suggested Guidelines

Politicians generally pay attention to correspondence on a ratio where:

- a personal respectful visit may have more impact than a 1,000 emails, and
- a personally delivered or mailed letter may have more impact than 500 emails

There are 5 freedoms at threat in our nation of Australia, that we must defend and keep on the 'boil' since the federal election. These are:

1. Freedom of Speech
2. Freedom of Conscience
3. Freedom of Association
4. Freedom from Discrimination
5. Freedom of Parenting

We suggest that you write a letter to your MP every Monday for the next 5 weeks.

The government website below provides details of the protocol on how to write / contact your PM (Prime Minister), MP (Member of Parliament), Ministers and/or Senators:

<https://www.australia.gov.au/about-government/contact-government/contact-ministers-members-and-senators>

The following bullet points are provided to help you construct a letter to the MP.

The Importance of Protecting our Religious Freedom

- The freedom to live and raise our children according to our values is extremely important to me. These values come from my religion; so, unless I have true freedom of religion, then I don't truly have freedom.
- In recent years, freedom of religion has come under increasing attack. We have seen Federal Labor propose laws to take away the rights of religious schools to employ teachers who hold consistent beliefs. I have also seen a highly decorated athlete, Israel Folau, sacked for simply posting statements from the Bible online, in his own time.
- At the 2019 Federal Election, one of the main factors determining my vote was the stance of the parties on religious freedom. It became clear that of the two major parties, the Labor Party's national policies would have removed religious freedom in important areas; so there was no way I could vote for them. I therefore voted for candidates who I thought would give firm protection of religious freedom.
- Since the Federal Election, many in the media have reported that there were many other people like me. In fact, religious freedom was a key factor that determined the votes of many people in many different electorates.
- It was one major reason why the Morrison government was re-elected. I believe many people who would never before vote Liberal, voted for them based on religious freedom. Basically, voters thought that the Liberals would do a better job of protecting their religious freedom.

Therefore, as my elected representative, I am strongly but respectfully requesting that you take positive right action on protecting my freedom of religion. I am requesting that you help to pass laws that give me a **positive right** to my religious freedom in 5 areas:

- A. Freedom of Speech:** I want the positive right to speak publicly, the teachings of my religion, within the bounds of civility and politeness; even if it means that some may disagree with me. I do not want what happened to Israel Folau, to happen to me.
- B. Freedom of Conscience:** I want the right to abstain from being involved in an activity that I object to on religious grounds, without the fear of losing my job.
- C. Freedom of Association:** I want the freedom to gather with like-minded religious people and discuss our beliefs in public, without worrying about being shut down or disrupted.
- D. Freedom from Discrimination:** I want the freedom to be able to be publicly open about my religious beliefs, including at work, without being worried about whether others may discriminate against me because of those beliefs.
- E. Freedom of Parenting:** I want the right to educate my children with MY values, even if that means teaching them that SSM (same-sex marriage) is not consistent with my religious beliefs. I also don't want my children taught things that I object to; like 'gender is fluid' or 'safe schools'. I want the freedom to send them to a religious school which only employs teachers that are of the same faith.

The Religious Freedom Review (Ruddock Report, 5/2018), provided 20 recommendations that go part of the way to addressing my concerns and I understand that the Morrison Government has agreed to implement the majority of these recommendations. I note that some of these recommendations require further consultation, before they are implemented.

With this in mind, I specifically request that:

- A. The government implements what they have **already committed** to, as a matter of priority, once parliament resumes in July, 2019.
- B. The government implements laws that allow religious schools the ability to hire teachers that share their faith, as soon as possible.
- C. The government implements **specific religious freedom legislation** that will provide protection for my freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of association, freedom from discrimination and freedom of parenting.

Please note that this issue of religious freedom is very important to me. I would like to know **what** specific positive right action you or your party will be taking to protect my freedom of religion, in the above mentioned 5 areas. Please also advise **when** you will be doing this.

If you choose not to address my concerns, then I can only conclude that this issue of religious freedom is not important to you. I will then be directing my vote away from your party at the next election and will also be actively recommending my friends and family to do the same thing. I await your advices.

Yours faithfully,

(The undersigned - put your full name and address here)

Written by: **Dr. Con Kafataris**
 (Australian Christian Alliance)

Date: **21st June, 2019**