



Protecting Yourself As An LGBTI Person From The Coming “Religious Freedom” Debates

It is an unfortunate fact of life that LGBTI Australians are getting “mixed messages” from the Federal government. On the one hand there is a stated wish to reduce suicides. However there are also moves afoot that can be reasonably expected to increase suicidal thoughts, if not actions.

By this I refer to proposed laws to allow those of an (acquired) religious persuasion to discriminate against others. Even the [Australian Human Rights commission](#), (amongst various others) has expressed concerns about the proposed legislation, they’ve said:

“Discriminatory statements of belief, of the kind described in clause 41 of the Bill, whether they amount to racial discrimination, sex discrimination or discrimination on any other ground prohibited by law, will no longer be unlawful. The Commission considers that this overriding of all other Australian discrimination laws is not warranted, sets a concerning precedent, and is inconsistent with the stated objects of the Bill, which recognise the indivisibility and universality of human rights. Instead, this provision seeks to favour one right over all others.”

It is widely recognised that these proposed laws are intended to try to placate the “Losers” in the Marriage Equality plebiscite. By this I refer to those vehemently opposed to giving same sex couples the right to marry. Unfortunately, these proposed laws also have the real potential (like the Marriage Equality debate) to cause mental health problems for LGBTI people and their supporters. (See e.g. [Preliminary Results of the Coping with Marriage Equality Debate Survey](#).)

You may wonder “What Can I Do to protect my mental health when these parliamentary and other debates start?”. So here’s a few suggestions (in no particular order) from various sources, including articles I’ve written elsewhere. Which ones you use are (of course) up to you and will depend on individual circumstances:

Firstly– Limit your contact with social and news media;

Secondly– Speak to or visit your local Federal politician (written submissions to the Federal governments “Religious Discrimination Bill – Exposure Draft” have closed);

Thirdly– Make a point of keeping in contact and spending time with LGBTI and supportive family and friends;

Fourthly– Prepare yourself for situations where others may try to “justify” support for these potentially discriminatory laws, for example by reading about how there are a range of reasons these proposed laws are being opposed – see e.g. a.) [Australian Human Rights Commission](#); b.) PFLAG ([Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#)); c.) A [report](#) about comments



from Tasmanian MLC Meg Webb or d.) [Tasmania’s LGBTI communities concerns](#) about the proposed Religious Freedom laws;

For those wanting an idea how hypocritical it can be to use the Bible to try to justify anti-LGBTI attitudes and beliefs, you might like to read this “[Letter to Dr Laura](#)” that was widely circulated on the Internet in years past.

Other things you might like to read include articles from [Out In Perth](#) written by myself and others. For example:

- [How do we protect ourselves from the culture wars?](#)
- [A mental health survival guide for the religious freedom debate](#)
- [What you as an LGBTI person can do to improve your mental health](#)

It might also be worth downloading the Switchboard resource “[LETS TALK SELF CARE DURING THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DEBATE](#)” with its suggestions for self-care to put up on the fridge or elsewhere.

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