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NATIONAL NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS FROM

Family Voice
AUSTRALIA

A betrayal of liberty: hidden dangers in the new laws against free speech

BY PETER DOWNIE, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, FAMILYVOICE AUSTRALIA

In January, the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Bill 2026 passed the Parliament. While the Albanese Government and Liberal leader Sussan Ley claim to have struck a deal to split Labor's draconian omnibus bill and remove 'racial vilification', the reality has shown a scam-like anti-democratic process and a broad attack on fundamental freedoms.

The omnibus bill was examined for just five days by a parliamentary committee, which was forced to ignore 7000 public submissions. The new Labor-Liberal bill was read into parliament ten minutes before it was listed on our parliament's website. Senior voices across the chamber, who had just a couple more hours of notice, were immediately alarmed.

Senator Alex Antic called it "the worst assault on freedom this Parliament has ever seen," while Senator Pauline Hanson warned against vague wording that could criminalise patriotic speech, and shared that Albanese refused to overturn her recent ban from the Senate.

In the House, Sussan Ley, Andrew Hastie and 21 Liberal and LNP colleagues joined Labor to pass the bill. Seven voted against: two Nationals MPs (Colin Boyce and Llew O'Brien) and five other crossbenchers, including Bob Katter (KAP), Dai Le (IND), and Barnaby Joyce (now with ONP). In the Senate, the Nationals, One Nation, Alex Antic (Liberal), Ralph Babet, the Greens, and a couple of independents voted against it.

In the end, 11 Coalition Senators including Senators Michealia Cash and Jacinta Price abstained, after news emerged of a swift backlash against Andrew Hastie's support for the bill.

Legal academic Professor Joanna Howe has described the legislation as "terrifying and threatening to Australia's democracy".

"They inserted some of the worst elements of the omnibus bill into the definition section in 114," Professor Howe warns. "The bill actually criminalizes hurt feelings."

Under the new "reasonable person" test for 'inciting hatred', charges can be laid if a hypothetical person from a national, racial or ethnic group feels "intimidated, harassed, or fearful for their safety."

As Professor Howe points out, this shifts the legal standard from intent to subjective perception. "If a Muslim member of the Australian community feels fear," she explains, simply because a person criticizes immigration from non-democratic countries, "that person is a member of a hate group, and they could go to jail."

A new aggravated offence targets

religious or community leaders. If a leader's words are deemed to radicalise others, a concept dangerously open to interpretation, they face 10 to 12 years in prison.

The Minister for Home Affairs now holds immediate power to designate organisations as "prohibited hate groups", which can be challenged by an unlikely Senate disallowance vote or by a lengthy committee review process.

Professor Howe notes that "procedural fairness [has been] thrown out the window." You can be designated a member of such a group without notice or appeal.

Howe warns that the hate group laws could apply retrospectively, meaning past attendance at marches could now be criminalized if the group is later banned.

The bill extended bans on displaying 'prohibited symbols' to disseminating ideas of 'superiority' to 'insult' a group, with narrow public interest exceptions.

"This bill will lead to ordinary, innocent, law-abiding Australians being sent to jail," Professor Howe states. "It has no place in this country."

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A betrayal of liberty: the political wreckage

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The Coalition, once the defender of free speech, has fractured as the National Party immediately withdrew their support of the bill, and eventually broke their political alliance.

Shadow Minister Andrew Hastie, who originally labelled the omnibus wording as “unsalvageable,” pivoted to vote for the reviewed version, a move many supporters view as trading free speech for a political deal. Meanwhile, Senator Jacinta Price engaged in a “hallway protest,” sitting out the vote entirely, a move seen by many as a refusal to endorse her party’s betrayal without technically crossing the floor.

Principled resistance came from Antic, Babet, and independents, and from a small group of Nationals MPs who voted ‘No’ and resigned from their frontbench positions, proving that some leaders still value conviction over convenience. But the Liberal

leadership’s support for this “grubby deal,” as Howe calls it, is a stark reminder that we cannot rely on politicians alone to protect our freedoms.

The Slippery Slope

The danger does not stop here. The Greens have already signalled that this is just the beginning. They intend to extend these “hate speech” definitions to cover gender and sexuality.

As in the case of Archbishop Julian Porteous who was hauled before a tribunal simply for defending traditional marriage. Likewise, under these new laws, if extended as the Greens desire, a leader like Archbishop Porteous might be jailed for 15 years. And the church he represents could be deemed a hate group.

Our Stand Continues

This is not “protection”; it is a silencing of dissent. Other minor parties like the One Nation Party and other independents have seen their



Alex Antic was the only Liberal to vote no

polling numbers rise dramatically as conservative and Christian voters express disappointment that Andrew Hastie, a noted future leader, kept on supporting the draconian Labor-Liberal bill.

The bill has passed, but the fight for the soul of our nation has only just begun.

We must remain vigilant, support those who stood firm, and prepare to defend the rights of families, churches, and individuals to speak the truth without fear of imprisonment.

Special legal services for LGBTQIA+

An independent “teal” MP’s call for the NSW Government to fund a dedicated legal service for particular sexuality and gender identities has sparked a strong backlash among voters in her Northern Beaches electorate, raising fresh questions about priorities and equal treatment under the law.

Jacqui Scruby, the Member for Pittwater, used social media to urge Premier Chris Minns and Attorney-General Michael Daley to invest in a specialised LGBTQIA+ legal service, arguing that the group has been formally recognised as a “priority population”.

Ms Scruby claimed NSW was “lagging behind” Victoria and Queensland, which have recently increased funding for LGBTQIA+ legal services. She said the Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC), which currently provides such services, receives no specific funding to assist people outside Sydney’s inner and eastern suburbs, leaving Pittwater residents without adequate support.

However, the proposal has drawn sharp criticism from many

constituents, with locals questioning why one group should receive a separate, taxpayer-funded legal service while Australians face mounting cost-of-living pressures.

Several residents commented on the MP’s posting that all citizens should have equal access to legal assistance, while others accused Ms Scruby of focusing on ideological causes rather than pressing local issues such as council rates, infrastructure, and community safety.

FamilyVoice NSW State Director Graeme Mitchell said the controversy highlights growing community concern about “identity-based policymaking”.

“Australians rightly expect governments to provide legal services on the basis of need, not sexual



Residents raised concerns about political demands for identity-based legal aid

orientation,” Mr Mitchell said. “Creating separate legal services for different identity groups undermines the principle of equality before the law.”

Ms Scruby became the first teal MP elected to the NSW Parliament after winning a by-election with the backing of Climate 200, a left-leaning political funding group.

FamilyVoice Australia has called on the NSW Government to resist further fragmentation of public services and instead strengthen existing legal aid systems so they serve all Australians fairly and equally.

Secret WA gender clinic policy harms children

A previously hidden policy governing the Perth Children's Hospital gender clinic has revealed that the Cook Labor Government enables teenage girls who identify as boys to be referred for double mastectomies and fast-tracked onto puberty blockers, prompting renewed calls for an urgent review.

The four-year-old "model of care" document was tabled in Western Australian Parliament in November after several refusals to parliamentary questions from Australian Christians MLC Maryka Groenewald to release it.

The Labor decision came immediately after Mrs Groenewald notified of a parliamentary motion to compel the document's release.

The document confirms that while the hospital does not perform mastectomies itself, the gender clinic actively connects under-18 patients with private surgeons for "top surgery", emphasising the "personal responsibility" of the child and family for the decision.

Darryl Budge, WA State Director of FamilyVoice Australia, said the revelations were deeply disturbing.

"This document confirms what many families feared but were repeatedly told was not happening," Mr Budge said. "We are talking about irreversible, life-altering surgery being facilitated for vulnerable teenage girls, with the government attempting to keep the policy hidden from public scrutiny."

The document also shows a dramatic increase in the use of puberty blockers. In September 2016, the clinic had 14



Maryka Groenewald's demands led to the document's release

minors on blockers.

"By September last year, that number had risen to 71—an increase of more than 400 per cent. On a per-capita basis, WA's rate now far exceeds that of the UK's former Tavistock clinic, which was shut down following the landmark Cass Review.

Mr Budge said the government's continued dismissal of the Cass Review was "reckless".

"The Cass Review is the most comprehensive investigation ever conducted into these treatments, and it found the evidence base for puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to be remarkably weak," he said.

"For WA Health to simply wave this away as 'not applicable' defies medical prudence and common sense."

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FamilyVoice warns on social cohesion

FamilyVoice Australia has raised fresh concerns about the rise of ideological extremism and the importance of protecting Australia's democratic and Christian heritage, following recent international debates about social cohesion, migration policy, and community expectations.

Victorian State Director Alan Barron notes Australia has welcomed diverse faiths, but governments must address beliefs clashing with freedoms and Christian values.

"Millions of religious devotees around the world are peaceful and contribute valuably," Mr Barron said. "Our issue is hard-line activists rejecting democracy, free speech, and legal equality for women. In some hard-line strongholds, criticizing religion or apostasy brings penalties. Australia must ensure freedom to convert, critique, or debate faith and values fearlessly."

Mr Barron notes that extremism erodes women's rights, speech, and legal equality. "Some international legal systems limit

women severely, which is incompatible with Australian traditions," he said.

France and the UK face tensions from non-integrating radicals seeking parallel laws, which harms cohesion. Meanwhile, Japan manages migration for unity. In Australia, we need calm debate without intolerance labels," Barron urged.

Mr Barron noted that the Prime Minister of the island nation of Samoa, Laaulialemalietoa Polataivao Fosi Schmidt, has sought to change the island's laws to limit the risk of strife that he has noted in neighboring nations and the Middle East. Samoa's PM warned that a growing non-Christian group could unite, sparking "discord, turmoil, and violence over faith." The island's

leader has requested church council input and has foreshadowed working towards a referendum for constitutional changes.

"In light of these concerns around the world, FamilyVoice believes that our nation should have honest debates about extremist beliefs, to value protections for fundamental freedoms, and have stronger integration policies.

"We must restore debate integrity like Charlie Kirk—to be truthful yet gracious. Christian beliefs on dignity, life, marriage, and sexuality anchor our Western freedoms.

"All must live under one law, sharing democratic commitments," Mr Barron concluded.

UN history of hate laws

BY DARRYL BUDGE, WA DIRECTOR, FAMILYVOICE AUSTRALIA

The new racial intimidation laws in Australia stem from a long-term UN trajectory that became clearer when the Morrison government endorsed the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech on 18 June 2019.

Australia's UN Mission response to the UN welcomed this strategy, noting "Hate speech is tremendously harmful". Under recent governments, our Communication Ministers have called for social media companies to implement better strategies against it. This trajectory, as committed through Australia's UN Mission, must be overturned.

The UN framework urges government coordination with tech platforms to suppress speech that intimidates, harasses, or causes fear, terms critics call elastic enough to target political criticism. It posits that certain speech "fuels radicalisation" and requires national programs aligned globally, evoking "the language of control." Platforms like Meta could then ban accounts for breaching terms on unlawful activity.

Back in 1947, Soviet delegate Alexandre Bogomolov pushed hate speech prohibitions into the UN Declaration of Human Rights, arguing, "Freedom of the press and free speech could not serve as a pretext for propagating views which poisoned public opinion. Propaganda in favour of racial or national exclusiveness or superiority merely served as an ideological mask for imperialistic aggression." But what of the ideology

of the UN's subjective superiority?

During ICERD debates in 1965, Columbia's UN representative warned against penalizing subjective offenses: "...we believe that penal law can never presume to impose penalties for subjective offences. This barbarous practice is merely the expression of fanaticism such as is found among uncivilized people." At that time Australia believed this as a democratic nation, and we must once again oppose communist ideals for subjective criminal laws on speech.

Australian Jewish Association CEO Robert Gregory urged MPs to reject the Criminal and Migration hate speech amendments, stating, "Governments should concern themselves only with the most egregious forms of speech, such as direct incitement to violence. This bill risks regulating subjective opinions and relies on vague concepts such as 'intimidation'." He added, "Ironically, many of the victims of the Bondi Beach attack were religious Jews whose traditional beliefs may themselves fall foul of future expansions of this legislation. ...this bill will rightly be seen as an attack on religious freedom." Critics of these latest amendments are right to warn of weaponization against Christian views or immigration critiques.

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Secret WA gender clinic policy harms children

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The model of care also confirms the clinic does not offer extended psychotherapy, nor does it formally assess autism or ADHD, conditions widely recognised as common among gender-distressed youth.

"This is not cautious medicine," Mr Budge said. "It is an assembly line of medicalisation that places ideology ahead of child welfare."

Mr Budge commended the work of Maryka Groenewald and her team, who lead this charge for transparency and protection of young people and who received support from several MLCs in the Liberal party and all of the One Nation party.

FamilyVoice Australia is calling for an immediate suspension and independent review of the WA gender clinic's model of care, greater transparency from the Health Minister, and a clear commitment to prioritising non-invasive, evidence-based support for children experiencing gender distress.

"Our children deserve care that protects their future, not policies that permanently harm them," Mr Budge said.

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