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CHANGES TO BILL A WIN FOR AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

Caritas Australia commends the decision by all political parties to pass the amended version of the Electoral Disclosure Reform Bill (EFDR) through both houses of parliament.

“In its original form, this Bill would have silenced the voices of tens of thousands of non-partisan Australian charities and other not-for profit agencies and thereby reduced the quality of public policy debate significantly,” said Paul O’Callaghan, CEO of Caritas Australia.

“Since Australian Federation in 1901, advocacy by civil society organisations has been a pillar of how Australian democracy thrived. It was this unconstrained civic voice that provided a necessary balance in public policy formulation and helped to keep federal and State governments accountable for the public good”, he said.

“Since early 2018 the concerted effort of the Hands Off Our Charities Coalition has enabled many Australians to appreciate the dangers posed by the original Bill. Due to the Coalition’s work, the final Bill has been greatly improved and now reflects the charity sector’s Red Line Principles on law reform,” Mr O’Callaghan said.

“The supporters of Caritas Australia are relieved to see that the voice of non-partisan contributors to public policy debate will not now be curbed”.

As a member of the Hands Off Our Charities Coalition, Caritas Australia, the Catholic Church’s international aid and development agency, commends all those within the national political process who accepted the need for major amendments to the Bill.

Last year, Caritas Australia assisted more than two million people directly through its emergency and long term development programs.

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