

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Proposed Victorian changes set to create powerful 'equality police'**

Proposed Victorian law changes to allow the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to initiate its own discrimination investigations without even a single complaint, would effectively create a powerful new 'equality police' in the State, the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) said today.

ACL Victorian Director Rob Ward said that legislation reportedly due to be introduced into Parliament today would substantially increase the powers of the Commission – allowing it to act as 'a law unto itself' in deciding which organisations should be investigated and what it viewed as sufficient grounds.

"Victoria is already becoming the 'politically correct' capital of Australia where people have to be concerned about whether what they say or do could be interpreted as vilification or worse, even if that is not the intention," Mr Ward said.

"Now it seems that the Government wants to give the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission even greater powers – allowing them to initiate their own investigations into 'discrimination' even when no concerns are raised.

"Rather than this helping to protect the vulnerable – who already have specific avenues through which to make complaints – we are more likely to see a range of organisations finding themselves at the mercy of a powerful human rights commission pursuing its own agenda.

"The Attorney-General has said that vulnerable people were reluctant to complain about powerful organisations - this legislation turns that concept around, with vulnerable organisations now to worry about an all-powerful Commission.

"Given the history of both the Commission and its often partner the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Christian organisations are among those which can have little confidence they will be treated fairly under these expanded powers."

Mr Ward said he is pleased that the Commission is not being given the powers of entry, search and seizure it wanted but the mooted legislation still goes too far.

"In the lead up to the November election it would be good to see the Government attending to real issues of concern in the community rather than manufacturing a new form of equality police," he said.

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