

Dear Federal Members of Parliament,

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 the Australian Government introduced into the Federal Parliament a package of three pieces of legislation. The three pieces of legislation consist of the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017, the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill 2017 and the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Bill 2017.

The stated intention of the Bills is to stop foreign interference in the Australian electoral process and on national security. But it has quickly become apparent to charities, community groups and other not-for-profits that the Bills propose grave and far-reaching changes that extend well beyond their publicly stated purposes.

If enacted, the proposed legislation will tear at the fabric of our democracy, unpicking the freedoms that have made our national conversation so rich. We are united in opposition to the proposed Bills.

The proposed Bills conflate advocacy for good policy with political campaigning for elections. They impose severe criminal penalties on expression and access to information that is central to public debate and accountability in a democratic society. The changes will stop charities, community organizations and not-for-profits from speaking out about issues that are of great importance to the Australian community.

The people of Australia and our country's civil society need to be free to air their views. This best guarantees that our laws and policies truly support the Australian community. That freedom is under threat from the proposed changes in this Bills package.

We are calling for the Federal Government, and all of our Parliamentarians, to pause, consult with those affected by these Bills and to redraft them. If left unchanged they will undermine the voice of the Australian community and threaten our democracy.

A simple, vital, step the government should take is to follow its own guidelines and prepare a *Regulation Impact Statement*, given that these Bills will have a huge impact on businesses, community organisations and individual Australians.

We will continue to address issues raised by the Bills and bring to the notice of parliamentarians the harmful effects of this legislation on the participation of Australians in their democracy.

This open letter is supported by the following groups:



Act for Peace – NCCA



Action Aid



ADRA Australia



Adult Learning Australia



Aid/Watch



ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM

Alliance for Gambling Reform



Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook



Alola Australia



Amnesty International



Anglican Overseas Aid



Anglican Board of Mission



Anglicare Australia



Animal Liberation Queensland



Arid Lands Environment Centre



Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility



AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

Australian Business Volunteers



Australian Conservation Foundation



Australian Council for International Development



Australian Council of Social Services



Australian Education Union



**AEGN**

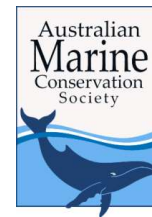
Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network



Australian Lawyers for Human Rights



Australian Major Performing Arts Group



Australian Marine Conservation Society



Australian Progress

Australian Refugee Action Network



**A•S•U**

Australian Services Union

Australian Services Union



Australian Youth Climate Coalition



Baptist World Aid/ Transform Aid



Bellingen Environment Centre



Benalla Sustainable Future Group



Beyond Zero Emissions



BirdLife Australia



Boomerang Alliance  
(representing the groups in this graphic)



Campaign for Australian Aid



CARE Australia



Caritas Australia



CBM Australia



Centre for an Ethical Society



Christians for an Ethical Society



Climate and Health Alliance



Climate for Change



cohealth



Colong Foundation for Wilderness



Combined Refugee Action Group



Community Broadcasting Association of Australia



Community Council for Australia



Community Power Agency



Conservation Council of Canberra & SE Region



Conservation Council SA



Conservation Council of Western Australia



Conservation Management Network (VIC)



Consumers Federation of Australia



Democracy in Colour



Digital Rights Watch



Earthworker Co-op



East Gippsland Rainforest Conservation Management Network



Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)



Environment Centre NT



Environment East Gippsland



Environment Victoria



Environmental Justice Australia



Environs Kimberley



Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform



Family Planning New South Wales



FCA

Farmers for Climate Action



Foundation for Young Australians



Fraser Island Defenders Organisation



Friends of the Earth Australia



Geelong Field Naturalists Club



Geelong Sustainability



Gene Ethics

Gippsland Environment Group



Global Health Alliance Melbourne



GM-Free Australia Alliance



Goongerah Environment Centre



Goulburn Valley Environment Group



Green Music Australia



Greenpeace



Habitat for Humanity Australia



HammondCare



Healesville Environment Watch Inc.



Healthy Futures



Householders' Option to Protect the Environment (HOPE) Inc.



Human Rights Law Centre



Humane Society International



International Fund for Animal Welfare



Invasive Species Council



JMTInc



Journeys for Climate Justice



Justice Connect



Kalang River Forest Alliance



Knitting Nannas of Toolangi



Koala Action Inc.



Limestone Coast Protection Alliance



Lock the Gate



Madden Sainsbury Foundation



MADGE



Market Forces



Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance



Moreton Bay Koala Rescue Inc.

Mt Taylor Park Care Group (ACT)



Musica Viva Australia



National Parks Association of NSW



National Parks Association of the ACT





National Parks Australia Council



National Tertiary Education Union



National Union of Workers



Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales



Nature Conservation Society of South Australia



NERSA - North East Regional Sustainability Alliance



North Queensland Conservation Council



NSW Nurses and Midwives Association



OzHarvest



Philanthropy Australia



Public Land Advocacy Network (PLAN)



Queensland Conservation Council



Queensland Koala Crusaders Inc.



Refugee Council of Australia



Renewable Albany Wodonga Energy Inc  
- RAW Energy



RESULTS International (Australia) Inc.



Rural Australians for Refugees



Save The Children



Sea Shepherd



Social Ventures Australia



SolarCitizens  
Solar Citizens



South East Region Conservation Alliance



Sunshine Coast Environment Council



Sydney Peace Foundation



tasmanian  
conservation trust inc

Tasmanian Conservation Trust



TEAR Australia



The Australia Institute



The Australian Charities Fund



The Centre for Volunteering



The Climate Council



The Fred Hollows Foundation



The Pew Charitable Trusts



The Wilderness Society



Total Environment Centre



Transparency International Australia



Tweed Water Alliance Inc.



Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA)



United Voice National



Uniting Church in Australia (Synod Victoria and Tasmania)



UnitingWorld  
connecting communities for life  
UnitingWorld



Victorian National Parks Association





Volunteering Tasmania



Volunteering Victoria



Wangaratta Sustainability Network



WATCH - Wodonga Albury Toward Climate Health



WaterAid Australia



Welcome to Australia

Wesley Centre Asylum Seeker Welcome Place



Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc.



Yajilarra Trust



3CR Community Radio Station



4nature