



Catholic Social Services
Australia

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Protecting free speech for not-for-profit organisations

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) welcomes the Government's announcement today that it will introduce anti-gag clause legislation in the next sitting of Parliament in order to protect and uphold the independence of the Not-for-Profit (NFP) sector.

The anti-gag clause legislation will provide a basis of confidence for organisations such as CSSA and its members that they will not be constrained from making public comment because they are in receipt of Commonwealth Government funding.

"As providers of services to people we often receive first-hand information which needs to be part of the public policy debate," said the Executive Director of CSSA, Mr Paul O'Callaghan. "We have an obligation to advocate on behalf of those people in the community we serve, as well as those who have no voice, and we commend the Government's decision to legislate to protect these voices."

"I would also like to acknowledge the effective role the Australian Greens have played in seeing this protection enshrined in legislation," he said.

"We are also pleased that this Government is making progress on the onerous red-tape burden for NFP agencies," he said. "The revised Government Grant Guidelines taking effect from June 2013 hold much promise in the area of Federal Government contracting."

"As does the Australian Charity and Not-for-Profit Commission's Charity Passport, which has the potential to impact significantly across Federal, State and Territory contracting arrangements," he said. "We welcome today's re-affirmation of support for the Charity Passport expressed by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Senator Penny Wong."

CONTACT: Jackie Brady 02 6285 1366 / 0417 220 779

www.catholicsocialservices.org.au