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Press Release re Religious Freedom

Co-founders of the Centre for International Reconciliation and Peace, Pastors Norman and Barbara Miller, said in Cairns today that they agreed with Social Services Minister Dan Tehan that Australia needs a Religious Discrimination Act to provide greater protection to people of faith. The state is continuing to encroach on religious belief in the areas of abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage. Political correctness is a challenge.

“We are waiting for the results of the review into religious freedom led by former Attorney-General Philip Ruddock following the same-sex marriage legislation to be made public. Government action in relation to this should be substantive and not a whitewash. We can’t have it swept under the carpet,” said the Millers. We don’t want to be subject to cultural cringe.”

“We do not want religion driven from the public square. Parliament should continue to be opened in prayer each day and schools and shopping centres should not be worried that they will offend other religions or people of no religion by traditional expressions of faith in Australia,” said the Millers.

“However we are not just looking at religious freedom, but freedom of belief, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and parental rights,” said the Millers and Ps Miller has painted a large yellow hand with FREEDOM printed large in the centre and the various freedoms printed on each finger and the thumb.

“I carried this hand up for freedom in the NAIDOC march in Cairns on Friday. It is also painted with Aboriginal designs” said the pastor who is also an Aboriginal artist.

“We urge the church not to be silent in this debate but to stand up for your beliefs and we urge people who aren’t part of faith groups to stand up for your values and your right to freedom of speech and conscience, “ said the Millers. “We do not want tokenism. We will not be brushed aside.”

The Ruddock review was delivered to the government in May after thousands of submissions so this attests to its importance to our nation.

“The last census showed that Christianity is practiced by 52% of the population but numbers are decreasing and heading towards minority status. Australia is now a multi-faith society and people of faith have only limited legal protections by way of ad-hoc exemptions to anti-discrimination laws, “said the Millers.

“This is why a Religious Discrimination Act is required. This is all the more necessary when states and the commonwealth have different laws re religious freedom.”

“People seem to forget that freedom of religion is internationally recognised as a human right. With the increase in secularism, this right needs to be protected. A framework needs to be worked out to deal with competing rights,” said the Millers.

Signed:

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