

**Catholic Religious Australia applauds and champions multiculturalism
17 August 2018**

Catholic Religious Australia is concerned about increasing incidences of racism in our nation. On August 14 this phenomenon was brought to a new level by means of an important Parliamentary process - a senator's maiden speech.

"Hard-won national values, such as esteem for fairness and tolerance, received a blow through that speech", said Sr Monica Cavanagh, president of CRA. "The Australian project of working towards being the most successful multicultural society on earth has received a set-back. More fundamental still, the Christian principles upon which Australian law and customs are built have been completely ignored", she continued. "Oddly enough, such an attack on Christian principles was made alongside an expressed desire for the Australian population to reflect Christianity."

Unfortunately, inaccurate reporting adds to the culture of blame and exclusion which racism involves. Both politicians and media have made inappropriate comments about so-called Sudanese 'gangs' in Melbourne. Despite evidence to the contrary, such reports fuel suspicion and fear. It is worrying that representatives of Australian institutions see fit to use untruths to further electoral prospects or to sell newspapers. Recent calls by MPs to 'ban the burka' feed the sense of grievance which underlies social media attacks on Muslims, as well as the reported incidents of spitting and name calling which some people endure. The speech in the Senate is another example of the normalising of such attitudes and behaviour. The inclusive ideal which is fundamental to multiculturalism is thus threatened. Catholic Religious Australia regrets this tendency and will actively oppose it.

It was pleasing to see the great majority of parliamentarians and balanced media commentaries deploring such an ill-conceived speech. It is to be hoped that serious thought as to the effects of the victimising of minorities will continue to be made by those who purport to represent the people, and by those who claim to be Christian.

Along with so many concerned Australians who value the 'fair go' and who recognise the inestimable value which all migrants bring, whatever their religion, Catholic Religious Australia champions voices of reason and compassion. "We reject the polarisation which all forms of racism bring. We recognise our own innate racism and strive against it. We honour and support Australians of whatever creed or culture and pledge ourselves to continue to work with them to advance Australia, with fairness", Sister Monica concluded.

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