



ASU condemns government's attack on community organisation advocacy

The Australian Services Union has made a submission to a parliamentary inquiry condemning the Government's proposed legislation which attacks community organisation's rights to engage in advocacy, as well as banning aid organisations and advocacy organisations from receiving international donations and funding.

The Bill puts a huge administrative burden on community services who engage in any public commentary or discussion of issues or policies that affect their clients and their communities. The extensive administrative burden that will be placed on already under-resourced and under-funded community organisations who engage in advocacy (regardless of their funding sources) will act as a significant deterrent for engaging in advocacy activities and is effectively a gag on advocacy.

The Bill also bans organisations from engaging in advocacy with funds from international sources. This is an absurd attack on the incredible work many charities, aid organisations, and campaigning organisations engage in on local issues like homelessness and domestic violence and global issues like climate change and poverty.

This latest move from the Government comes after sustained attacks on community sector advocacy over many years. We oppose this latest attack and wholeheartedly support the very important advocacy work that community sector workers do – it is a vital part of a civil society and should be championed and applauded, not gagged by government.

We are also concerned that limiting advocacy will cause job losses, as the significant number of advocacy jobs that currently exist would no longer be needed.

Community services are at the frontline of many social problems. Their voices are the ones we need to hear in order to understand how government policies are affecting people in our communities. Generating public debate on issues of local and global significance is of benefit to our community and enhances our democracy. Any attempt to limit advocacy by community services, advocacy organisations and aid organisations should be rejected.

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