

Council welcomes backdown on Racial Discrimination Act

Monash Council has welcomed the Abbott Government's decision to withdraw its proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Government had proposed repealing parts of the Act including Section 18C which makes it unlawful to publicly "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" a person (or a group of people) because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin.

Monash Council objected strongly to any changes to the Act. At its April 2014 Council meeting Councillors voted unanimously to oppose the changes.

Council also sent a submission to the Federal Government advising of its strong opposition to any changes to the Act.

Monash Mayor Geoff Lake said it was well documented that racism can have a harmful effect on the mental health and wellbeing of its victims.

"Monash is one of the most multicultural communities in Victoria with 45% of our people having a parent born overseas and 142 different languages spoken," Cr Lake said.

"Every member of our community – irrespective of their background – has the right to enjoy a happy, healthy, safe and productive life as well as protection from acts of racism and discrimination.

"The government's decision to back away from these proposed changes is the right decision and reinforces the message that racism in any form will not be tolerated in our community."