Dear Federal Members of Parliament,


The stated intention of the Bills is to stop foreign interference in the Australian electoral process and on national security. But it has quickly become apparent to charities, community groups and other not-for-profits that the Bills propose grave and far-reaching changes that extend well beyond their publicly stated purposes.

If enacted, the proposed legislation will tear at the fabric of our democracy, unpicking the freedoms that have made our national conversation so rich. We are united in opposition to the proposed Bills.

The proposed Bills conflate advocacy for good policy with political campaigning for elections. They impose severe criminal penalties on expression and access to information that is central to public debate and accountability in a democratic society. The changes will stop charities, community organizations and not-for-profits from speaking out about issues that are of great importance to the Australian community.

The people of Australia and our country’s civil society need to be free to air their views. This best guarantees that our laws and policies truly support the Australian community. That freedom is under threat from the proposed changes in this Bills package.

We are calling for the Federal Government, and all of our Parliamentarians, to pause, consult with those affected by these Bills and to redraft them. If left unchanged they will undermine the voice of the Australian community and threaten our democracy.

A simple, vital, step the government should take is to follow its own guidelines and prepare a Regulation Impact Statement, given that these Bills will have a huge impact on businesses, community organisations and individual Australians.

We will continue to address issues raised by the Bills and bring to the notice of parliamentarians the harmful effects of this legislation on the participation of Australians in their democracy.

This open letter is supported by the following groups:

Act for Peace – NCCA

Action Aid
Goongerah Environment Centre
Green Music Australia
Habitat for Humanity Australia
Healesville Environment Watch Inc.
Householders’ Option to Protect the Environment (HOPE) Inc.
Humane Society International
Invasive Species Council
JMTInc
Journeys for Climate Justice
Justice Connect
Goulburn Valley Environment Group
Greenpeace
HammondCare
Healthy Futures
Human Rights Law Centre
International Fund for Animal Welfare

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