

Statement on Hate Crimes Bill

People with disability have the right to live their lives free from discrimination and vilification. **Vilification**, also known as ‘hate speech’, involves encouraging hatred, revulsion, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a group of people (or member of that group). This can involve, for example, shouting insults, making gestures, distributing leaflets or making comments online.

Unfortunately, vilification is a common experience for many people with disability. The Disability Royal Commission **revealed harrowing stories** of people experiencing constant insults, ridicule and threats of violence because of their disability. Vilification has caused many people with disability to live in a state of constant anxiety, with some reporting that they are scared to leave their house.

In response to growing social division in Australia, the Federal Government recently introduced the **Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Bill 2024** (the Bill) into Parliament. The Bill will strengthen existing offences for urging violence and create new offences for threatening violence against ‘targeted groups’. Most significantly, the Bill expands the definition of ‘targeted groups’ to include people with disability and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

People with Disability Australia welcomes the Bill and commends the Government for including disability and LGBTQIA+ communities as targeted groups. However, like **other minority groups**, we are disappointed that the Bill only criminalises threatening violence, and does not criminalise serious instances of vilification, as was **originally promised**.

Vilification, like threats of violence, can cause significant psychological harm and stop us from enjoying our fundamental human rights. While everyone has the right to freedom of speech, this cannot come at the cost of other people’s human rights.

We call on the Government to expand the Bill to criminalise vilification and send a strong message that hatred will not be tolerated.

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