

**Statement from the Exclusive Brethren on Senator Bob
Brown's notice of motion calling for a Senate inquiry into the
Church's activities**

February 9th, 2007

The Exclusive Brethren finds it offensive that Senator Bob Brown is seeking a Senate inquiry into the Church's activities.

The Brethren community feels Senator Brown's action smacks of a witch hunt and hopes the vast bulk of fair-minded Federal Parliamentarians will oppose it.

There is no need for a Senate inquiry into the Exclusive Brethren.

Church members, their businesses and schools are subject to the same regulations, laws and scrutiny by government agencies, tribunals and courts as all other Australian individuals, businesses and schools.

Therefore, there is no need for additional Parliamentary scrutiny.

Brethren hold as a principle the deepest respect for the law and teach obedience to the law and integrity in personal and business matters.

The Church meets its obligations under Federal, State and Territory law.

All Brethren schools receive government funding in the same way as similar non-government schools. All Brethren schools are fully registered and accredited with the Board of Studies in their particular state.

There are very few cases involving Brethren families that have been adjudicated in the Family Court. In such cases the Church always encourages its members to abide by the Court's decisions.

The Brethren Church actively encourages members to meet the access requirements arising from Family Court cases.

Women Brethren, or non-Brethren, are not discriminated against by Church members. Brethren women play an active role in running businesses owned by Church members and non-Brethren women are employed in those businesses and as teachers in Brethren schools.

Brethren members respect and promote education through to Year 12 and support tertiary studies by correspondence.

Brethren members claim exemption with respect to union membership, which is provided under the relevant State and Federal legislation.

The Exclusive Brethren in Australia are grateful to be an active part of the Australian community and despite Christian beliefs which may longer be generally held in the Community, they respect the democratically-elected governments and are diligent in seeking to respect and uphold the rule of law.

Our Church does not, however, seek to impose those views on others.

Contact:

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Senator Brown's motion of February 7th:

Leader of the Australian Greens (Senator Bob Brown): To move — That the following matter be referred to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 12 June 2007:

The role of the Exclusive Brethren, including its leadership, in:

(a) breaching Australian Family Court agreements and denying access by ex-Brethren parents to their children;

(b) ex-communicating family members;

(c) prohibiting children from their Australian right to a university education;

(d) banning unions from Exclusive Brethren workplaces; clubs teams etc

(e) discriminating against women in Australia;

(f) the use of public monies; and

(g) any related matters.