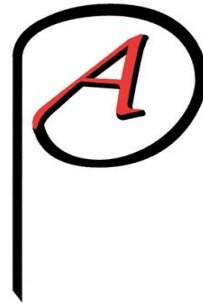


Progressive Atheists Inc.

Est. 10 Jan 2010 Reg: A0054119U Member of AAI

"Your participation is PA's future"



January 2016

... we seek to go beyond divisive racial, religious, tribal, and sectarian constructs, and instead, contribute to a universal humanity.

Headlines

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- Progressive Atheists Inc. **'Proudly Atheist' T-shirts & Badges**

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Website: progressiveatheists.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ProgressiveAtheistsInc

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*Please send articles, news, letters and comments to:
editor@progressiveatheists.org*

Progressive Atheist Inc. | Headlines

Conference: Religious Freedom Roundtable – Australian Human Rights Commission

Progressive Atheists have been invited to Thursday 18 February 2016: meeting of non-faith organisations hosted at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in Melbourne.

- **Thursday 18 February 2016:** meeting of non-faith organisations hosted at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in Melbourne. Further details to be advised.
- **Friday 19 February 2016:** meeting of LGBTI organisations hosted at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in Melbourne. Further details to be advised.

At the commencement of his term, the Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson conducted a national consultation on rights and responsibilities. A central theme to the consultation was the importance of religious freedom. The outcomes from this consultation are outlined in the *Rights and Responsibilities Consultation Report 2015*, which is available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/publications/rights-responsibilities-consultation-report>.

As outlined in this report, one of the Commissioner's priority areas of work is to form a religious freedom roundtable to bring together representatives of different faiths to facilitate how to advance religious freedom in Australia.

The roundtable will be an on-going dialogue. Given there are multiple interests in religious freedom, the format of the roundtable will be to engage with various stakeholders at different times to address issues relevant to religious freedom.

To inform the roundtable discussions, the Human Rights Commissioner conducted a public submissions process during September 2015. The Commissioner was particularly interested to receive feedback on the following issues:

- Government laws and regulations that limit the right to religious freedom.
- Preserving religious freedom when an organisation receives taxpayer's money to provide a public service.
- Balancing the right to religious freedom and equality before the law – what are the areas of shared agreement?
- Developing mechanisms to support religious inclusion and social cohesion.

This submission process is now closed.

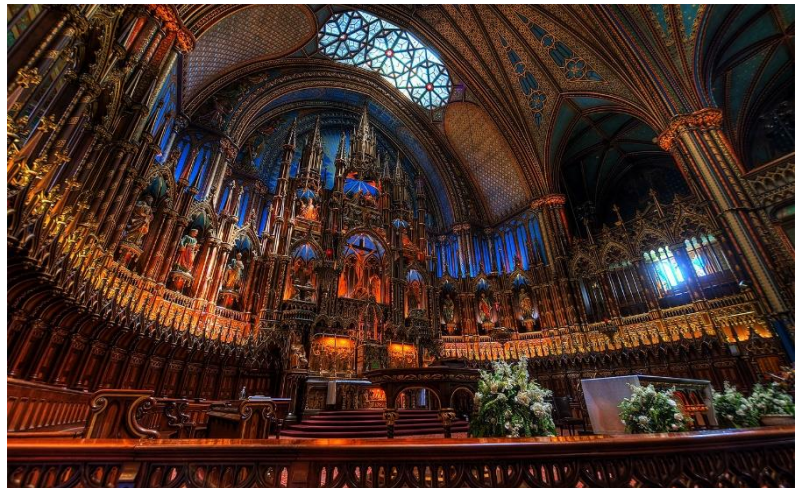
See more here: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/projects/religious-freedom-roundtable>

Opinion:

Has Australia become a soft theocracy?

-Brian Morris

* **Soft Theocracy** — “A state where church and government purposes coincide to garnishee taxpayers’ money and resources, structurally through tax exemptions and functionally through grants and privileges.” – *Realising Secularism: Australia and New Zealand*. 2010. Ed. Max Wallace.



Christianity does not afford someone the divine right to ignore everyone else’s, writes Brian Morris.

Has the Christian lobby influenced the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in discrimination against gays? If the answer is no, why has the HRC set up a [‘Religious Freedom’ Roundtable](#) for the faithful, on 5th November?

This forum is not about ‘religious freedom’, it simply reflects a resurgent Christian lobby clamouring for new exemptions from anti-discrimination laws.

As one clear example, Church leaders want special “religious liberty” for any Christians in the lucrative wedding industry to **refuse services to gays**, once same-sex marriage is finally legalised. They want to give caterers, photographers, outfitters and others the “liberty” to snub gay couples who violate their religious beliefs.

It’s been brewing since the HRC’s Tim Wilson took office in 2014, and while he is also “defacto” Commissioner for LGBTI issues, there are legitimate questions about how far he’ll go in shaping HR policy, to accommodate Christian anger at the very idea of marriage equality. [He is reported as saying](#), “... we can design a law that’s more mindful of religious freedoms.”

‘Freedom of religion’ has been mandated for decades under a UN charter, adopted by Australia, and religion already has many ‘extended freedoms’ – including exemptions from anti-discrimination laws in education, health and aged care.

Consider also their grants and annual tax breaks worth billions; that Australia has the largest number of religious schools per capita in the OECD; that religious instruction and a national Chaplaincy Program persists in public schools, despite government funding twice being [ruled unconstitutional by the High Court](#).

CONTINUE READING HERE: <https://newmatilda.com/2015/10/20/human-rights-roundtable-has-australia-become-a-soft-theocracy/>

Celebration: International Darwin Day –

February 12 2016



In the beginning, the solar system revolved around the earth, and humanity was carved from clay and bone—plopped, as it were, perfectly formed into a populated garden. Origin stories are, however, meant to be rewritten, and the reformation of central, essential ideas about the nature of things meant and means challenging powerful ideologies and institutions.

As was the case for earlier insights that re-situated our view of our place in the cosmos, the study of naturalism and biology threatened to expose the mutability of the human species and jeopardize a theological stranglehold on scientific discovery. The truth will out, as they say, and as Copernicus struggled to free the truth behind a heliocentric system, so too did Charles Darwin muster an immense intellectual bravery, a perpetual curiosity, and a ravenous hunger for truth in an attempt to understand the origins of modern life.

While Darwin's remarkable impact on biology, cosmology, and the scientific process generally cannot be understated, it is again his undeniable desire for truth through scientific discovery, his unwavering curiosity to discover that which was hidden (naturally or purposefully), and his determination to brave intellectual depths that inspires us.

See more here: <http://darwinday.org/about/>

Event: Darwin Day Celebration – PA Event

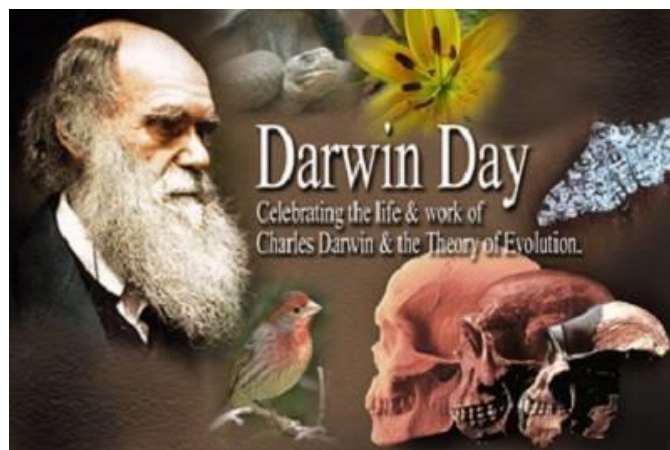
Friday 12th February 2016 at 12:00

This event is for people in and around Melbourne who would like to come together and celebrate the scientific studies of Charles Darwin.

Please come along with something to eat and drink. BBQ's will be available to use. Bring your friends and family and celebrate what it means to be an evolved being.

Progressive Atheists encourages people all over the world to come together and celebrate this day with family and friends.

Groups participating in this event include Progressive Atheists Inc., VicHumanists and VicSkeptics.



The Progressive Atheists' organisation and some of its members are actively involved in global campaigns to help and free the victims.

There is a lot more that we can do but we need your help.

Want to assist with this campaign? Email Progressive Atheists at campaigns@progressiveatheists.org

To make a donation for a banner to be used outside the Saudi Embassy, please donate on the Progressive Atheists website: <http://progressiveatheists.org/products/donations/raif-badawi-campaign/>

Progressive Atheists Inc.

Est. 10 Jan 2010 Reg: A0054119U Member of AAI

Progressive Atheists Inc. Open Meeting

Our next Progressive Atheists Inc. Open Meeting will be held on Saturday 27th February for lunch and discussion at 12:00 PM - **Melbourne Unitarian Hall, 110 Grey St, East Melbourne VIC 3002**. All who support our purpose are welcome.

Progressive Atheists Purpose Statement:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/about-us/purpose-statement/>

Melbourne Atheists MeetUp Group | Event Calendar

Keep in touch with atheists around Melbourne via the Melbourne MeetUp:

<http://www.meetup.com/Melbourne-Atheists/events/calendar/>

Membership Term 2015 | 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016

Progressive Atheists Membership is \$20 per annum / \$10 concession.

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