

CIFS Cult Information and Family Support Inc.

Present a National Conference on
“CULTS IN AUSTRALIA: FACING THE REALITIES”

**November 2, 2011
9.00 am to 4.00 pm**

Parliament House, Canberra, ACT, Australia – in Room 2 S 2

Co-Hosted by Queensland Liberal **Senator Sue Boyce** &
South Australian Independent **Senator Nick Xenophon.**

It is estimated there are at least 3000 cult groups, small and large, operating within Australia.

The behaviour and actions of some of these groups results in a legacy of mental, physical and financial damage to individuals and families, from which many may never fully recover.

Freedom of religious belief is a fundamental right, but groups which perpetrate abuses and hide behind this important freedom must still be held accountable.

There is a gradually increasing awareness in Australia, among politicians, mental health professionals, human rights advocates and the general public, that the fundamental right to freedom of religion cannot be used to justify abuse.

The objective of the conference is to focus attention on and recommend safeguards against the serious harm caused by cults in Australia.

This Conference will evaluate the measures taken by other countries to protect their citizens from cults, and seek to identify the political, legal and educational strategies needed to address what is a major problem in this country.

Many attempts have been made over the years to lobby for solutions and address serious issues affecting families, children, individuals and ultimately society from groups which have caused abuse and harm.

This Conference aims to bring about responsible debate and action on behalf of Government to protect Australian society and its citizens, including to:

- Establish a body to hear and investigate complaints of abuse;
- Adopt a criminal offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing psychological harm" as set out in the 1998 Model Criminal Code of Attorneys-Generals but not enacted;
- Strengthen Health Care Complaints to deal with the issues relating to "deliberately, recklessly or indifferently interfering with psychological health or access to qualified medical treatment"; and,
- Protect youth through education on the risks of cult involvement.

Attendance is free, but registration is essential.

To register, go to www.cifs.org.au and complete the November Conference Registration Form online.

Please note, morning tea will be supplied. Lunch options are available onsite for attendees to purchase.

Conference updates and information will be displayed on www.cifs.org.au
For further enquiries, contact CIFS by email, at info@cifs.org.au, or call 0423 332 766.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Session 1 : International Experience with Cult Issues

M. Georges Fenech (France)

President of MIVILUDES - Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combatting Cultic Deviances

"The French system for monitoring & struggling against sectarian deviations"

Tom Sackville (UK)

President of FECRIS - European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sects or Cults.

"The curious refusal of the British political establishment to do anything to counter the cult threat"

Session 2 : Public Policy and Political Options

Stephen Mutch (Australia), PhD, LLB (UNSW)

Honorary Fellow, Dept of Modern History, Politics and international Relations, Macquarie University, Sydney

"Cults and Public Policy: Protecting the Victims of Cultic Abuse in Australia"

Senator Nick Xenophon

Independent Senator for South Australia

Senator Penny Wright

Greens Senator for South Australia

Session 3 : Some Personal Perspectives

Presentations by three Australian survivors of cults.

Session 4 : Mental Health, Family Law, Human Rights and Media Issues

Professor Patrick McGorry

Mental Health Expert, Australian of the Year 2010 and Founding Board Member of *headspace*, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation

Raphael Aron

Director, Cult Counselling Australia, and Author

"The Destructive Illusion of the Cult Family: The Challenges of Effective Exit Counselling"

Michael Bachelard

Australian investigative Journalist and Author

"Reporting on Cults; Rewards and Punishments"

Session 5 : Open Forum and Recommendations