

The RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BILL-a reflection!

As anyone who walks into the Rose Bay R S L Club, they immediately see a large painted sign that says; **“THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS TO BE ETERNALLY VIGILANT.”** I saw this sign many decades ago and the profound wisdom of it has never left me. This reality refers to any type of freedom whether it is political, social, or religious.

Before our State parliament at the moment there is a proposed religious freedom bill to be debated before it will be passed as law. Essentially this bill is to ensure that people who are within any religious organization have the freedom to publicly uphold their beliefs. This of course is a two-way process where religious organizations do not also have the liberty to impose their beliefs on people who do not adhere to a religion. This principle does not happen in a number of Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Practically this bill in our parliament will hopefully continue to endorse the freedom for a Catholic hospital not to be compelled to do procedures such as a deliberate abortion of an unborn child or to euthanize people. Also, it would not compel Catholic clergy to preside over a same sex wedding. To sustain this freedom is a constant challenge.

If religious freedoms are not allowed and respected it will then be a short step to restricting the freedom of *everyone* from acting according to their conscience. *Fr Martin R Maunsell*