

## Anti-porn activist threatens to sue blogger over religion claims

Written by Smh.com.au | Farah Farouque  
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A blogger who characterised anti-porn activist Melinda Tankard Reist as a "fundamentalist Christian" says she has been asked to apologise - or be sued.

Tankard Reist - who briefed lawyers to warn off liberal blogger Jennifer Wilson - says it's not being called Christian she objects to, but the claim that she is "deceptive and duplicitous about her religious beliefs".

She has sought legal advice from Canberra defamation lawyer Ric Lucas, who once represented Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and former treasurer Peter Costello and their wives in a successful action against publisher Random House over false claims in a memoir by Bob Ellis.

While Tankard Reist has not gone so far as to issue court proceedings yet, she complains social media has intensified the level of vituperation against outspoken figures such as herself.

"Things have gone too far, people think they can just trash you," she said yesterday. "Why does being a blogger exempt you from the laws of defamation?"

Despite there being only a handful of defamation cases over online activity in Australia, it does not.

Barrister Wendy Harris, SC, said the same legal rules applied whether you published a book or sent a much less considered message via Twitter, blog or Facebook post.

"Something is defamation if it tends to lower someone in the eyes of reasonable and right-thinking people," she said.

The "reasonable" test excludes those with oversensitive or particularly strong views - so where

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does that leave Dr Wilson, who despite receiving the legal threat, has refused to take down her post?

The defiant blogger, who goes by the nom de plume No Place For Sheep, said she would continue to make strong criticisms of Tankard Reist - who can also dish it out.

"I believe someone who makes public comment about morality really needs to be upfront about where they are coming from."

She insists that author Tankard Reist, whose resume includes advising anti-abortion senator Brian Harradine, is loath to discuss her links to evangelical Baptism.

"[Her] involvement with fundamentalist Christians opposed to abortion, contraception, surrogacy and homosexuality are well documented, and I have to wonder why she's singled me out at this point in time for writing about her religious beliefs," she said in a post written after the lawyer's letter.

The internet imbroglio began after Dr Wilson, a psychotherapist, queried why a recent *Sunday Life* cove  
r story on Tankard Reist had not canvassed the subject's religious beliefs.

Meanwhile, the debate it unleashed has earned the Twitter hashtag #MTRsues - which also displeases Tankard Reist.

"It's not a spat when you are being defamed," she said.

Source: [Smh.com.au](http://Smh.com.au)