

Submission

Religious Freedom Review, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Parliament House, Canberra.

To whom it may concern,

Hindu Council is concerned that Religious exemptions may adversely affect students, employees and teachers of other faiths studying or working in faith based schools/institutions. A recent case of a Hindu student in a Catholic school who was asked to hide her religious symbol has alerted us to this issue.

Hindu Council of Australia urges ALRC to expand its scope to include religious rights of others faith believers as well as of non-believers in faith based institutes so that they are not discriminated based on their religion or for not having one.

In particular we would like you to include a discussion on following points pertaining to Religious Freedom (including freedom to practice and freedom to not practice any or anyone else's religion) in your scope :

1. Each faith based institute (including schools, charities, businesses etc) should make public its policy for students/clients, employees, contractors, suppliers of other faiths.
2. The institute will respect their faith and beliefs even if they are different from the faith professed by the institute.
3. Those of other faith should not be asked to hide their religious identity, should be clearly told that their participation in religious services is optional and non-participation will not be viewed negatively. No attempt shall be made to coerce them to change their religion.
4. Faith of an applicant should not be a reason to refuse admission, service, employment, business, promotion or participation.
5. Faith based schools and employers must admit a certain percentage of students, employees, teachers of other faiths so that students while learning about their own religion, do not grow without contact with students and people of other faiths, cultures, orientation and backgrounds.
6. No other religious group should try to interpret another faiths beliefs but should be guided by the religious leaders of the other faith.
7. Only the courts of law can interpret a faith practice if it violates human rights or is ultra virus to Australian constitution. Only the courts have the power to interpret a practice, belief or tenets of a faith
8. Within the constraints above, an institute will have freedom to profess, teach and practice their faith within the institute.
9. No faith based institution will ever be forced for its resources to be used in any way to promote, encourage or propagate teachings that are against the teachings and beliefs of that faith.