

Dear ALRC,

I am making this submission as an individual with secular beliefs.

I wish to support your propositions, as outlined below:

- make discrimination against students on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy in schools and other religious educational institutions unlawful, by removing exceptions currently available under federal law,
- protect teachers and other school staff from discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy, by removing similar exceptions, and
- allow religious schools to maintain their religious character by permitting them to:
  - give preference to prospective staff on religious grounds where the teaching, observance, or practice of religion is a part of their role (and it is not discriminatory on other grounds); and
  - require all staff to respect the educational institution's religious ethos

I believe, however, that more emphasis should be placed on the rights of secular people to hold their beliefs – particularly given we are the biggest grouping (and growing) within Australian society.

I am relieved that you have not returned to the rhetoric of the Morrison Government, which I believe wished to overturn the current Victorian laws (where I live) on religious discrimination, and which I believe are working well to protect people of different sexuality and marital status.

I was lucky enough to attend good public schools in Australia and the USA, and whilst I am secular, made many friends of different religions – particularly in the US. Had it not been for this school I would not have met many Jewish friends to enjoy their culture, and also people of other religions.

I am saddened by the increased perception in Australia that religion must be a primary factor as the denominator of a school, rather than the quality of the education. Why must we stop children and people of different religions/secularism mixing- when it can only help when they understand each other's viewpoint more fully.

As a country in which religion and government are separated, I find it extremely discomfoting that religious schools take government funding yet would like to discriminate against who can come to them or teach in them.

Thankyou for allowing and considering public comment on an issue that the previous Government made extremely divisive, and appeared to champion discrimination on religious grounds, rather than advocating for religious and secular tolerance.

James Thyer, PhD.

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