

Dear ALRC,

I am a high school teacher at Heathdale Christian College, a school which only employs Christians. I worked in a secular independent school before coming to Heathdale.

The organisational culture here at Heathdale is massively different from my first school. At Heathdale, we incorporate our religious expression into our daily routines – we pray before meetings, share devotions in the morning, and teach a distinctive Christian curriculum.

If we hired non-Christians, we would simply cease to be a Christian school – prayer would be empty, devotions meaningless, a Christian curriculum taught by non-Christians would be tokenistic. It simply would not work. The school relies on Christian teachers who actually live out what they teach; a teacher would be hypocritical if they taught something they didn't believe.

Likewise, if a church was forced to be made up of non-Christians, it would cease to be a Christian church. If a women's organisation was forced to be inclusive of men, it would cease to be a women's organisation. If an Islamic school had to hire non-Muslims, it would cease to be an Islamic school.

I believe that religious schools – of all religions – should have the right to freedom of assembly and association. If they aren't given that right, the government would be effectively banning religious schools from existing, which would constitute religious discrimination.

The religious schools of our nation are a distinctive alternative to secular schools, and the diversity of these options should be celebrated. Removing religious schools will cause a loss of diversity of opinion and diversity of religion in our country. We should be a society that celebrates religious plurality and diversity, rather than one which imposes uniformity of belief.

I also believe parents should have the option to send their children to religious schools. This cannot happen if religious schools are essentially prevented from existing as religious schools.

Anything which removes the right of assembly and association from our school will threaten our ability to exist, and I would hate to see that happen in our country.

Kind regards,

Carla Hurt