

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Anti Discrimination Law](#)
Subject: Religious schools must remain free to operate according to their ethos
Date: Friday, 17 February 2023 10:14:27 AM

Dear Australian Law Reform Commission,

I would like to address several of the four propositions in the consultation paper into Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Laws.

Firstly, I disagree with the first points of propositions A and B which state that religious educational institutions should not be allowed to discriminate against current or prospective students and staff on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy. Concerning students, I believe that schools should have the right to enforce appropriate measures to address and prevent open promotion of ideologies that conflict with the school's beliefs (e.g. transgenderism, inappropriate sexual behaviour, homosexuality, etc.). If they are prevented from doing this, it conflicts with one of their very reasons for existence of upholding and promoting their worldview based on their understanding of their religious tenets. Concerning staff, I believe that religious schools should have the right to employ or promote only those who authentically live out their faith in accordance with the religious basis of the school – and to replace those say they agree with the school's beliefs but live contrarily. Again, a religious school cannot effectively teach and pass on its own values if the staff do not live these out. Parents of children in such schools have chosen, deserve, and are paying for, this distinction. I worked in a Christian school for 13+ years, and observed that this does not necessarily mean that students with contrary beliefs and/or orientations will be excluded from attending the school. The school I worked at had homosexual students and parents, for example. However, I do believe the school needs the right to deal with students who are promoting ideologies in conflict with the school's values if they deem it necessary for maintaining their own values.

Secondly, I was initially encouraged by point 3 of Proposition B, which states that, “Religious educational institutions should be able to require staff involved in the teaching of religious doctrine or belief to teach religious doctrine or belief on sex or sexuality as set out by that institution and in accordance with their duty of care to students and staff, and requirements of the curriculum.”

However, point 3 of proposition D then says, “Respect for an educational institution's ethos and codes of conduct or behaviour should not require employees to hide their own sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy in connection with work or in private life, or to refrain from supporting another person with these attributes.” So, even though Proposition B states that religious schools can require staff to teach a particular worldview, this becomes of no effect when teachers are given complete freedom to live completely and openly opposed to these teachings. I therefore call upon the ALRC to remove point 3 from Proposition D.

The prevalence of faith-based schools in Australia shows that they are valued by a significant proportion of families. The ALRC should therefore not seek to ‘fix’ something which is not broken. In particular, I believe that the basic freedom of religious schools to operate according to their ethos must continue unfettered by discrimination legislation. Anyone who disagrees with a religious school's code of conduct can simply attend a different school. It seems highly unlikely, anyway, that parents who disagree with any school's code of conduct would send their child/ren to that school, particularly if they have to pay fees to do so.

I am deeply concerned that serious consideration is being given to what is really a stripping away of personal choice and freedom of belief. Why is this even being considered in a democratic society? Surely freedom of thought, belief and speech is a basic facet of democracy?

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Debbie Briese

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