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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 24 February 2023 7:33 AM
To: Anti Discrimination Law
Subject: Please accept my submission to the ALRC Religious Educational Institutions Inquiry

Dear Australian Law Reform Commission,

Please accept my submission to the ALRC Religious Educational Institutions Inquiry.

I believe that Christian educational institutions should not be subject to any reforms which would make it more difficult for them to operate as a “community of faith”. While the consultation paper acknowledges the importance of this statement, it unfortunately includes many specific propositions which seriously undermine this ability.

For instance, the paper seeks to remove protections in Section 38 of the Sex Discrimination Act which allow religious schools to uphold their ethos by exclusively hiring staff who authentically live out their faith consistent with the school’s tenets and values. Proposition B in the inquiry’s consultation paper says that, “Religious educational institutions should not be allowed to discriminate against any staff (current or prospective) on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy.”

Furthermore, even though point 3 in proposition B commendably states that relevant staff must “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”, I am alarmed by some of the examples provided in the consultation paper which seek to portray what this would mean in practice.

One of these examples declared that a LGBTQ+ staff member should “teach the school’s position on those religious doctrines or beliefs, as long as they were able to provide objective information about alternative viewpoints if they wished”. Another example noted that a teacher must be “permitted to objectively discuss the existence of alternative views about other lifestyles, relationships, or sexuality in a manner appropriate to the context”. I am shocked that this consultation paper openly supports the ability of teachers to effectively contradict a religious school’s fundamental moral teachings!

I am also deeply concerned that the removal of religious schools’ exemptions from the Sex Discrimination Act (which makes a person’s self-identified gender identity and sexual orientation protected attributes) will render religious schools powerless against the destructive transgender ideology which allows students to access toilets, showers, change rooms, camps and sports of the opposite sex. Not only is this ideology completely against the religious teachings of many faith-based schools, but it will also take away the ability of parents to give their children an education free from the many practical dangers of accommodating transgender students.

To support parental rights and diversity of education, this inquiry must ignore anti-religious demands which seek to remove the rights of faith-based schools. I therefore call upon the ALRC to change the thrust of its recommendations to protect the rights of religious educational institutions.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Aimee Walmsley

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