



Submission from Geoffrey W. J. Dethlefs concerning:

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS and
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS**

I have been an educator in Australian Schools (including for one year in a school in New Hampshire, U.S.A.) for almost 50 years. I commenced in NSW in 1966 and concluded as an emergency teacher in Victoria in 2016.

My teaching has included 22 years as a School Principal, mainly in Christian Schools, 22 years as a classroom teacher, and 5 years as an emergency teacher.

1966-71 – NSW Government Schools at Broken Hill and Castle Hill

1971-72 – The Kings School, Parramatta

1973- 78 – Kinross-Wolaroi School, Orange, NSW

(1976-77 – The New Hampton School in New Hampshire, USA – on exchange)

1979-83 – Principal at St. Andrew’s (Primary) School, Walkerville, SA

1983-93 – Principal at Heathdale Christian College, Werribee, Victoria

1994-98 – Principal at Dalby Christian School, Dalby, Queensland

1999-2000 – I took two years off in lieu of Long Service Leave I had not had.

2001-02 – Principal at Gippsland Christian College, Traralgon, Victoria
(sadly, I had to oversee the closure of this school)

2003 – Classroom teacher at Mirboo North Secondary College, Victoria

2004-11 – Classroom teacher at Chairo Christian School, Drouin, Victoria

2012-16 – Emergency teacher for Chairo Christian School, Drouin, Victoria

Most of my teaching (37 years) has been in Church or Christian Schools.

School is where children are taught by teachers who make a significant contribution to their understanding of life, its purposes and its goals. Back in the late 1960’s the Christian School movement began because families found a growing disconnect between what they, as parents, wanted for their children, and believed was right for their children, and what was happening within government schools.

The Australian Government very wisely decided to assist such schools with funding because every parent was a taxpayer, and was entitled to at least assistance, in their children’s education costs.

This meant that schools could be set up where any disconnect was minimal. What the parents wanted for their children was supported by the teachers at their Christian School, because the school saw itself as a resource to educate the children of Christian believers, who wanted the teaching of the Bible to be central to all education.

This is the book upon which all of western civilisation is based. Increasingly however, governments have made decisions in relation to abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and other issues that are contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

The essential issue is that governments are not the educators of children according to their particular ideology; they provide a means of collecting tax monies to be spent on education. Parents have the absolute right to educate their children in the way they see fit, for parents, not governments are given by God the task of raising children.

We know we live in a pluralist society, and not everyone sees the world through the lens of the Bible. But we have been trained over time in our Western Society, whoever we are and whatever our beliefs, to see that freedom of thought and speech are values central to democracy, and we should graciously “live and let live”.

We tolerate different views but freely promote our own for any who decide to listen, should they be troubled about life, and be seeking different answers. We know there are many people so troubled because huge numbers, frustrated and uncertain, take their own lives.

Christian Churches and Schools should always be free to promote their view of life; and Muslims, Hindus, Naturalists, Sceptics, Hedonists, Buddhists, Communists, and every other group the same.

Any group, who believe certain tenets, must be allowed to have staff members who equally believe those tenets, so they can teach them to those who come to learn. Many Christians send their children to Christian Schools so their children can experience and understand what Jesus teaches about life and about behaviour that matches.

I am sure the Liberal and Labor parties, if they ran schools, would only want those who supported their tenets, teaching their children.

Thus, I am calling upon the Law Reform Commission in their recommendation to the Australian Government, to enshrine and protect the right of Schools of Faith to employ only teachers who will affirm and teach, and live by that faith.

Geoff and Nan Dethlefs