



Submission Into the Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Laws Review

Submission Organisations:

Christian Voice Australia (CVA) is a national non-denominational organisation advocating on issues of family, faith, and liberty with a focus on the education and parental rights of Christian families.

CitizenGO is an international organisation that also advocates on issues of family, faith, and liberty from a biblical perspective.

National Director:

Greg Bondar is the National Director of CVA and the National Campaign Director for CitizenGO and an *Advocate, Apologist, Chaplain*, and accredited *Lay Preacher* (Anglican).

Bondar holds qualifications in business and education as follows:

- **Master of Business Administration (MBA)** – University of New England
- **Master of Education** - University of NSW
- **Bachelor of Economics** – University of Sydney
- **Diploma in Education** – University of Sydney
- **Diploma in Special Education** – Charles Sturt University

Bondar began his career as a secondary school teacher over 10 years and taught both gifted and less gifted children (disadvantaged). Bondar has extensive experience in the not-for-profit, corporate, government, and education sectors as a CEO, Board Member, and Consultant.

Our Submission:

We have reviewed the Australian Law Reform Commission's **Terms of Reference** issued by the Attorney-General of Australia, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, to consider reforms to the way Federal anti-discrimination laws apply to religious educational institutions.

We now respond as follows to some key questions raised in the review.

NOTE: We make the point that the questions asked were drafted in such a way so as to, we believe, achieve a predetermined outcome based on the 'wording' and/or 'words' used in the questions.

Question: Do you see the creation of a ‘community of faith’ within a religious educational institution as important?

Submission: *Schools are about more than just teaching Maths and English – they are a learning community that shapes the whole person. That’s why schools teach sports, art, and ethics. Parents choose faith-based schools because they want that learning community to also be a community of faith that shapes their child’s thinking and morals.*

As a former teacher and an advocate, I have experienced the community of faith in schools, and colleges, and how parents, students, and staff value Christian teaching as a part of education.

Question: What do you think about reforms to change the law so that religious educational institutions would not be allowed to discriminate against students on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy?

Submission: *Schools set down codes of conduct for students that reflect the values of the school and the community it serves. We agree that no student should be harassed or bullied for any reason. However, all schools should be able to have rules of conduct that reflect the faith of the community.*

If I am a member of a golf club and cannot abide by the rules then I am advised to find a NEW golf club. This simple analogy is what needs to apply to Christian schools – if an LGBTIQA+ student/parent does not like the ‘rules’ or ‘codes of conduct’ or ‘ethos’ of the school then find a NEW school.

Schools must have rules of behaviour in keeping with their faith.

Question: What do you think about reforms to change the law so that religious educational institutions would not be allowed to discriminate against staff on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status or pregnancy?

Submission: *Schools that are faith communities need to have staff who uphold that faith. Faith is a fundamental worldview that impacts all of life for a believer. For many faiths, this impact includes sexuality. Staff who work in faith-based schools and colleges should expect to be asked to share the values of the faith community, not only in their teaching but in their manner of living out their faith. In your answer, you might discuss the value of having staff that uphold the faith in creating the faith community in a school or college. For faiths that hold to specific beliefs about sexuality, those beliefs cannot be separated from the rest of the faith.*

Question: In relation to the employment of staff and selection of contractors...

- **what do you think religious educational institutions should be permitted to take into account in preferencing members of the same religion?**
- **what do you think religious educational institutions should not be permitted to take into account in preferencing members of the same religion?**

- **Are there some factors that institutions should be permitted to take into account for particular employee/contractor roles, but not for other employee/contractor roles?**

Submission: Each faith has its own scriptural requirements and some have restrictions on clothing, diet, and all kinds of behaviour. It is dangerous for a Government, and certainly not part of its mandate if you believe in the separation of *Church and State*, to decide which bits of faith a religious school is allowed to require, and which bits are not.

The ALRC must recognise that there is need for religious organisations to be allowed to hold their own faith and not be dictated as to what they are and are not allowed to believe.

This is a fundamental doctrine of democracy.

NOTE:

Greg Bondar is the National Director of CVA and the National Campaign Director for CitizenGO and requests the opportunity to appear before any Committee or Hearing.

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