

To: The Australian Law Reform Commission.

Re: Response to Religious Educational Institution and Anti-Discrimination Laws

To whom it may concern,

I am a concerned parent of a nine year old daughter and volunteer in my spare time on community services with the practice of building bridges between people of different beliefs through philosophical discussion groups.

These Changes would Outlaw Religious Freedom and Teaching

Childhood education is a fundamental component of religious practice. For a government to overlay their theoretical worldview over religious worldviews is a denial of religious freedom.

Teachers are role models for a code of conduct to students no matter what technical subject they are teaching at the time. Teaching a code of conduct is done by example because morals are more caught than taught. Therefore the teachers, and other staff, must believe and live out the same ethos the school was setup to instil in students. Otherwise their example would be contradictory and the teacher would be seen as hypocritical then many students would rebel against the ethic spoken but not exemplified.

Faith is foundational to the very culture of faith-based schools. This proposal would constitute a new manifestation of religious discrimination because there would be no freedom in Australia for parents to practice their own faith in the form of moral educational principles with integrity.

This Legislation Destroys Liberty

The Government is not a neutral. No government or political party has a neutral ideology. Likewise, no teacher teaches from a neutral philosophical context. Their own world view will influence the classroom teaching and discussion with students.

A democratic community respects diversity, freedom of speech, includes people with all beliefs and accordingly respects the rights of its members to maintain their views. Christian schools do the same for the student body.

However, in the context of organised religion a democratic pluralistic society must guarantee liberty for these groups. In order for religious groups to maintain their views, the full diversity of views present in society must be able to flourish. This means people groups must have the liberty to create schools that maintain their particular religious convictions.

A State Religion would Destroy Freedom and Democracy

These changes would violate the line separating Church and State giving the State the authority to decide how a religious organisation must function. The State would be undermining their school's ability to function freely in accordance with its ethos.

The impact of legislation limiting the rights of religious schools from employing Christian people across all its positions would be to make them indistinct from public schools. In the end the schools would have to either conform or close down. The outcome is the same: No faith-based schools and the State's ideology becomes the practical religion.

Non-Christian Parents want Christian Education for their Children

The Census results show that fewer Australians identify with Christianity, however, enrolments in Christian schools are on the rise. This means that secular parents want the values that Christian schools teach to be taught to their children. Australians recognise that the Judeo-Christian values upon which western nations are built are valuable even if they don't subscribe to the religious propositions.

Judeo-Christian Values are Good for the Country

When Biblical morals are taught and practiced, it promotes good character and quality learning, resulting in young adults who possess a strong work ethic and quality character.

There is nothing harmful about the fruits of the Spirit taught, modelled and practised in all Christian schools: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. Against such things there is no law.

This legislation would violate Human Rights

The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* makes this clear:

18.4 "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions".

Is this Proposal really about LGBTQI2S+ Favouritism ?

Christians do not want laws that would allow a school to discriminate against a student, but these possible law changes do not address that issue. Some bigoted people think Christians and Christian schools discriminate against LGBTQI2S+, however, this is a political myth.

Christians have respected the rights of students who identify as LGBTQI2S+ for decades and the Christian ethos itself demands that of our Christian schools. Jesus (God himself) demanded that the mob forgive and uplift the prostitute they wanted to stone to death. This story forms the foundation of many western ethics: The rejection of hypocrisy and the values of forgiveness, redemption and rehabilitation.

Parents or teachers, who are uncomfortable with a sexual ethic different from their own currently have the freedom to choose schools where the ethos is more accommodating to their own beliefs. Since the public school system is dominant in Australia, they have plenty of options to choose from and there for no excuse for them to demand that minority schools conform to the majority. That would be a totalitarian practice.

In summary, I hope you take my arguments under consideration and consider what is the right thing to do in a diverse democratic society that values liberty and freedom and diversity.

Kind Regards,
Keith Foster

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