



Deadline for reporting on Religious Educational Institutions Inquiry Extended

The Attorney-General of Australia, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, has today announced an extension to the reporting deadline for the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC's) Inquiry on Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Laws.

The report, which was initially due on 21 April 2023, will now be delivered to the Attorney General by 31 December 2023.

The extension responds to a request made by the ALRC in late February for further time to consider more than 420 submissions received in response to its Consultation Paper on reform proposals, and more than 40,000 survey responses.

Part-Time Commissioner tasked with leading the Inquiry, the Hon Justice Stephen Rothman AM, said that the ALRC was pleased to have been granted further time to work through the issues raised by stakeholders in relation to proposed reforms.

“The issues raised by this Inquiry are of great significance to a large number of Australians. It is important that the Commission considers the many varied perspectives thoroughly and sensitively.”

The extension will also enable the ALRC to engage further with its Advisory Committee in finalising its recommendations, but will not involve another round of broad consultations in light of the large volume of submission and survey responses already received.

Background

On 4 November 2022, the ALRC received Terms of Reference from 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.

The ALRC was asked to consider what reforms should be made, compatible with Australia's international human rights obligations, to ensure, to the extent practicable, Federal anti-discrimination laws reflect the Government's policy commitments in this area.

The Terms of Reference describe the Government's commitments as ensuring ‘that an educational institution conducted in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of a particular religion or creed:

- must not discriminate against a student on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status or pregnancy;
- must not discriminate against a member of staff on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status or pregnancy;
- can continue to build a community of faith by giving preference, in good faith, to persons of the same religion as the educational institution in the selection of staff’.



Australian Government

Australian Law Reform Commission

About the Australian Law Reform Commission

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) is an independent Australian Government agency that provides recommendations for law reform to Government on issues referred to it by the Attorney-General of Australia.

In November 2022, the Australian Government appointed New South Wales Supreme Court Judge, the Hon Justice Stephen Rothman AM, as Part-Time Commissioner for the Inquiry.

ENDS

Inquiry Consultation Paper: <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/adl-cp-2023/>

Inquiry Home Page: <https://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiry/anti-discrimination-laws/>

Inquiry Terms of Reference: <https://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiry/anti-discrimination-laws/terms-of-reference/>

Further information on the work of the ALRC: <https://www.alrc.gov.au/>

Media contact: Sarah Fulton, Principal Legal Officer
sarah.fulton@alrc.gov.au