



From: [Redacted] 005
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 7:02 AM
To: Policy AGD
Subject: Letter regarding The Anti-Discrimination Act.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Natasha Fyles,

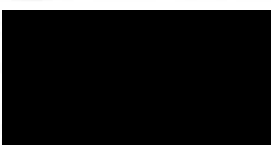
This letter is a response to the discussion paper regarding the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1993 where it is suggested that exemptions for religious or cultural bodies be removed.

As a member on NT Christian Schools, I understand that the current exemptions are of foundational importance for our schools. Here are my reasons,

1. Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right. Religion is inherently 'manifest' – it results in real and tangible worship, practice, teaching and actions. Our schools embody this.
2. Everything that everyone does and thinks is 'discrimination' in some way. 'I like apples rather than pears' is a discrimination. For the 'state' to interfere with our freedoms to believe things, or say things, based on 'offending' someone is a slippery slope that interferes with our basic human freedoms. Not all beliefs can make everyone happy. To try and legislate this way is impossible and ultimately 'discriminatory'. *How we discriminate is important.* Our laws should make sure that discrimination is 'within' the law and that it is reasonable and responsible, but our laws should not tell us what to believe.
3. Our schools exist because there were (and continue to be) a body of parents who actively want Christian schools with Christian values. These values are based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and are therefore distinctive. The only way for this to continue is if the staff share a common set of values and beliefs that are in line with the vision of the school. The schools are 'distinctive', and that is why they exist. To deny this distinctiveness is to destroy the heart and soul of their existence, and deny many parents the ability to choose the kind of education their children get.
4. Our schools promote good outcomes and good citizens. There is no evidence that the existing exemptions are creating 'discrimination'. No one is forced to send their child to one of our schools, and the beliefs of our schools are not forced on others outside of them.
5. Within the schools, and I say this as a teacher at [Redacted] there is healthy and respectful discussion about different views. We acknowledge difference, and actively respect those who hold them. We also promote Christian values. They are not mutually exclusive ideas.
6. I think that it is possible, and actually good, to believe in something, and be in dialogue with people who believe differently. To shut down the ability for us as a society to respectfully believe things that are different to one another, is bad for our society.

Please don't take away our rights as Christian Schools to exist in our distinctiveness. It is a negative outcome for our society, and for the parents and children at our schools. It takes away our fundamental rights for religious freedom. It reduces our ability as a society to dialogue with care and respect.

In closing, and to promote transparency, I ask you to make sure that a report on the consultative process and outcomes be made public.



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