

Sent: Thursday, 30 November 2017 4:25 PM
To: Policy AGD
Subject: Anti Discrimination Act

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

To whom it may concern,

I am a parent of 2 young girls at [REDACTED]

I am writing to voice my concern re the anti discrimination act discussion paper.

Some of the proposed changes would have a significant impact on the ability of my daughters school to protect, preserve and perpetuate a vision for Christian education in the Northern Territory.

Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right and has been a long-held freedom and practice in Australian law and should continue. This paper seems to indicate the degradation of that.

Christian schools are good social citizens and conduct themselves in responsible and reasonable ways. There is no evidence that the existing automatic exemption has created discrimination.

The ability to legally and exclusively employ Christian staff, who are in step with the religious values and beliefs of the school community, goes to the very heart of why Christian schools exist. All staff, no matter their role, must share a common set of beliefs and practices to contribute to the vision and mission of the Christian school. This is what makes our schools distinctive.

Parents have a human right to choose the kind of education their children receive. Christian schools were established by Christian parents seeking an authentically Christian educational expression for their faith in all aspects of the school community. Therefore, Christian schools will be different to state or even church schools. Parental choice is made on the basis of such difference. If this 'point of difference' is diminished, parental choice and diversity are also diminished. The right of parents to send their children to school where they will be educated within a Christian community is a freedom consistent with a democratic, tolerant and pluralistic society.

"Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Article 26.3

Christian schools seek to reflect the beliefs of the Christian faith in all that they do, and clearly state their beliefs and their values. It's impossible to miss that they are steeped in the teachings of the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ. While some agree with this faith, many don't. Those who disagree can choose another option. They are not required to be a part of a faith-based community. But for those who do agree, faith affects every decision about life, learning and morality.

Christian schools believe that all of life is sacred; that the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms everything. If Christian schools have to justify the need for an exemption to a secular tribunal that is making decisions based on what it understands to be 'religious', freedom of religion will be compromised. For a Christian school, every aspect of every task within the school community is inherently religious.

The current automatic exemptions, which provide protection for Christian schools to practice in accord with their beliefs and values in every aspect of their operation, must be preserved.

Finally I ask that a report on the public consultation be released.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Regards,

