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To whom it may concern

I am writing to you as a member of my community. I am not a legal person. I do not act for or speak on behalf of a department, organisation or company. But I do have an opinion about the Anti-Discrimination Act (1993) and some of the changes that are proposed. My comments are based on relationships and personal experience and are given in good faith.

REPRESENTATIVE COMPLAINT MODEL

10. Should a representative complaint model process be introduced into the Act? Should there be any variations to the process of the complaint model as described above?

I understand that we should protect vulnerable people. In saying that you also hear so often of false accusations which lead to people's lives being ruined. I believe we should be mindful of protecting all individuals and organisations from trivial or hear say accusations including those made by a third party on behalf of someone whether that person wants to pursue a complaint or not. This instead would make it easier for a group or organisation to make trouble for those they disagree with or dislike for any reason. I see this as encouraging a rise in expensive and time wasting reports by third party groups with an axe to grind with little or no requirement for proof or accountability.

REMOVING CONTENT THAT ENSHRINES DISCRIMINATION - RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

14. Should any exemptions for religious or cultural bodies be removed?

I do not believe the existing exemptions for religious or cultural bodies should be removed.

Please bear with me as I tell you a story.

[Redacted] my husband and I started to consider where we would like our daughter to go to school. We [Redacted] chose to investigate the option which would cost us – the small fee-charging Christian school [Redacted] [Redacted] This would not only be a faith choice but a financial decision for years to come.

It was very clear what this little school stood for. It was in the name. Nothing was hidden. We met with the principal who told us all about the school and its passion to provide quality Christian education in the Palmerston area; its humble beginnings around a kitchen table and the likeminded parents and educators who had gathered five years earlier to discuss a

vision. It didn't have all the bells and whistles but it did have the community and small school feel which we were also keen to be part of.

The decision was made and our daughter commenced her school education the following year. It had been our choice and there were no surprises. We knew exactly what we were getting and her siblings followed in subsequent years. In those following years, Palmerston grew and we now live in the middle of five schools – three public and two private – and we still travelled past all of them to get to the school of our choosing.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

No one was forced to be there.

Each principal gave the same or similar message of full disclosure about our school to each parent who came for an interview. Parents made their decisions for their children based on facts not fiction. No one forced them and if they were unhappy or disagreed with the school's vision, then simply, they did not enrol. Choice. There is another perfectly good school down the road.

Not all the families are Christian. Nor do they have to be. This school is not selective in its enrolment. They take students based on available space in the classrooms. Its aim is to provide quality Christian education for all who choose to partner with them – non Christian or Christian. Partner being the operative word. Over 2200 student's parents have chosen to do that willingly.

The staff population is 100% Christian. Full stop. The principal, the maintenance officer, the teacher's aide, the admin ladies and the teaching staff. They do not all worship at the same church or have exactly the same theology but they all come with the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. The starting point for a Christian school.

The council and board are also made up of Christians. These likeminded people ensure that the school is always governed by those who share the same vision as the founders. This is important for the school's future credibility and integrity.

Parents come with the full understanding that the principal and staff are Christian. They also know exactly what that means. Their child/ren will be told about Christ. They will not be excluded from that message because it is part of what the school represents. And parents have said yes to that.

So what would be the change if the school could not request that staff be Christian? You may think that as long as people are good people and agreed with the vision, then that would be fine. I would disagree with that definition. Maybe one would be fine but it is one thing to agree with something and then be able to live and teach it. How many would it take – one, two, or ten and suddenly the Christian is not quite true. The school, in time,

could easily become just Christian in name, not in practice, and that would be not Christian at all. Get a non-Christian principal and the story is over. How could anyone possibly lead a Christian school with integrity if they were not Christian? They might be an excellent leader and person but how could they, with honesty and credibility, deliver the vision of Christian education?

You may not understand this subtle difference but it is there. We don't go out and bang the tambourines but we do go about our business of being what we say we are – a Christian school. The point of difference is Christian. Take out the Christians from a Christian school and you have a school. Hopefully a good one but why would I have bothered to travel past five other good schools to get to this one? Interestingly if we had gone with the public education option, we would have had no choice at all as the area is zoned.

This coming year the school celebrates its 30th year. We will honour all those who have gone before us and all those who will follow and we do so in the hope and prayer that in 20 years' time when we celebrate our 50th year, that same vision and same purpose will still hold truth. This, I believe, cannot be achieved without good and faithful Christian leadership and staff.

Please don't take away the choice.

Modernising Language

20. Should definitions of "man" and "woman" be repealed?

How many of the population still recognise themselves as man or woman? If I can't call myself a woman then what am I? I recognise that others may consider themselves under a new title/definition and I don't have a problem with that but why should my definition be repealed? I think it will just confuse the issue for the majority and perhaps needs an option of 'Other'. Sounds simplistic, I know, but why do we have to make it harder than it should be.

21. Should the term "parenthood" be replaced with "carer responsibilities"?

I deal with children. They have someone who looks after them and these 'families' are made up of many different combinations. They can be their parents – mum and dad – or a whole different make up of people from grandparents, aunts, uncles, to step-parents, guardians and yes, carers. But they are people, who in the most part, love them and it is personal. Each one is to be treated with respect.

Please don't devalue these relationships by turning it into a clinical definition. Parenthood, and whether that is a mother, father or any other combination or gender preference, is still an important relationship which children need to recognise. 'Carer responsibilities' is hardly a term to encourage or truly reflect this relationship.

In the end it is always about respect. No amount of writing it down and turning it into law will actually make it better. You actually have to change attitudes and individual's actions, and we all need to stand up and be counted for that.

