

# Media Release



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## Religious Freedom on Trial – AGAIN!

Not content with potentially criminalising ‘prayer-based practices’ earlier this year the Victorian Government has revealed the next stage in its attack on people of faith in Victoria.

In proposals announced this morning Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes will invite Courts and Tribunals to determine, retrospectively, who faith-based organisations, including Christian schools, can employ in different roles within the organisation.

‘The Victorian Government’s claims today are farcical,’ said Director of Public Policy, Mark Spencer.

‘The Attorney-General claims that the proposed changes will have “no impact on schools’ ability to convey their religious beliefs to students”,’ he said, ‘but then goes on to say that it is only where a Court or Tribunal consider it “appropriate” that those schools can hire staff based on the person’s belief.’

‘These proposals could fundamentally change the nature of Christian schools’, he said.

‘Why is the Government trying to dictate to a Christian school who it can employ or in what role?’

‘The Attorney-General can choose all her staff on the basis of their political beliefs – why can’t Christian schools simply choose all their staff on their religious beliefs?’

The proposals go on to indicate that the Government is intending to remove the rights of individual people of faith to act on their beliefs when it comes to other attributes protected under the Equal Opportunity Act.

‘This clearly downgrades protections for religious belief to a second class right,’ Mr Spencer said, ‘this is fundamentally inconsistent with international human rights law, the protections in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Australia is a signatory.’

‘People of all faiths across Victoria need to be asking the Government questions about what this means for them.’

With the Government previously indicating it will look at reducing protections for free speech by making so called vilification claims easier it really is three strikes against fundamental freedoms for Victorians this year.

‘Lockdowns might only be temporary,’ Mr Spencer said, ‘but the removal of freedoms proposed today will last much longer’.

ENDS

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### About Christian Schools Australia

Christian Schools Australia is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating over 70,000 students and employing nearly 10,000 staff at 170 locations across Australia. CSA is part of the global ACSI network of 24,000 schools educating in excess of 5.5 million students in over 108 countries world-wide.

