



25 November 2021

Religious Discrimination Bill a long overdue 'fix'

The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, was right to say this morning that the Religious Discrimination Bill would 'fix' the long-standing gap in Commonwealth discrimination protections. Christian schools and their communities across Australia agree with the Prime Minister that 'protection of what we choose to believe in a free society is essential to our freedom.'

'Those who oppose this Bill are opposing freedom,' said Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy for Christian Schools Australia, 'it really is as simple as that in relation to a straightforward Bill protecting a fundamental human right.'

The Report of the Expert Panel on Religious Freedom in 2018 made it very clear that "Australia does not get to choose ... between protecting religious freedom and providing for equality before the law. It must do both under its international obligations".

'We don't get to pick and choose which rights we protect,' Mr Spencer said, 'only protecting fashionable rights.'

As the Prime Minister indicated, 'The bill protects the fundamental right for religious schools to hire religious staff to maintain their religious ethos, in accordance with a publicly available policy'.

'Christian schools applaud this clear commitment to a fundamental element of the protection against religious discrimination,' Mr Spencer said, 'this will provide the certainty to schools and their communities that the Prime Minister mentions.'

'The Commonwealth is rightly including safeguards against any attempts by States to undermine these protections,' he said, 'fundamental human rights are not negotiable and should not be bypassed in this way.'

'We would not accept the States undermining other discrimination protections, why would it be acceptable for religious discrimination.'

'Christian schools are also heartened by the positive comments from the Opposition Leader regarding the importance of protecting religious freedom,' Mr Spencer said, 'we hope this means that this Bill can pass with bi-partisan support.'

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 more than 10,000 staff at 180 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.

