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It Is Time to Protect Students and Protect Schools

As the 47th Parliament prepares to sit next week, Christian schools are calling on the Albanese Government to get the ball rolling on **long overdue protections** for LGBT students and faith-based schools.

‘The last parliament **failed people of faith and LGBT students**,’ said Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy at Christian Schools Australia.

‘It is time to protect people of faith against discrimination and end the uncertainty for faith-based schools and LGBT students’.

‘There is no evidence that students are being expelled from faith-based schools simply because they are gay as we have been saying for the past five years,’ Mr Spencer said, ‘however, the fear created in LGBT students by LGBT activists is genuine and must be addressed, despite being totally unfounded’.

‘The failure of the last parliament to pass the Religious Discrimination Bill 2022 provided no pathway for these issues to be resolved’.

The Religious Discrimination Bill 2022 was **abandoned** by the former government, despite being passed in the House of Representatives, as it was tied to **controversial amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act** previously **rejected by parliament** because of the unintended consequences.

‘Recent media coverage only serves to **heighten the concerns** of school communities seeking a faith-based education and LGBT students with faith-based schools’, Mr Spencer said.

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) under President Professor Sarah Derrington commenced a review of religious exemptions in 2019, but this review was put on hold by the former government. Professor Derrington’s current term as President of the ALRC expires in November this year.

‘Christian schools want to see the current exemptions redrafted and anti-discrimination laws clarified to ensure **an appropriate balancing of fundamental human rights**’, he said, ‘we know that this is an essential element of ensuring that fundamental protections against religious discrimination are passed.’

‘With Professor Derrington having already commenced this work, we **cannot afford the inevitable delay** and loss of experience that would accompany a change of leadership mid-review’.

‘We are **calling upon the Attorney General** to amend the terms of reference of the ALRC Inquiry to allow it to recommence as soon as possible’, Mr Spencer said, ‘as well as committing to extending the current term of the ALRC President if becomes necessary’.

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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 around 72,000 students and employing more than 10,000 staff at more than 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.

