
MEDIA RELEASE

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ALRC report a direct attack on faith

Christian school groups have categorically denounced recommendations in today's report by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) to remove the right of faith-based schools to employ staff who share their beliefs and call upon the Albanese government to immediately reject the recommendations. The recommendations in the Final Report provide fewer protections for faith-based schools than in the controversial initial Consultation Report.

Labelling the report "a direct attack on faith and freedom of belief in Australia", Christian Schools Australia (CSA), Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) and Associated Christian Schools (ACS) say if adopted, "Christian education as we know it will cease to exist."

CSA Director of Public Policy Mark Spencer said, "Hundreds of thousands of Australian parents choose to send their children to faith-based schools because they value this type of education.

"They enrol their children knowing that our teachers and staff are aligned with our beliefs and that students will be taught according to our beliefs.

"If these recommendations are adopted, parents would lose this right, and the government has no right to remove this choice."

He said it was important that the government understands that "Christian schools are communities of faith, where Christian teachers and staff engage with students from a faith perspective both inside and outside the classroom and are expected to be available for Christian devotion, prayer and support.

"A staff member who doesn't share and support our beliefs cannot effectively teach our beliefs or support students according to our beliefs," Mr Spencer said.

AACS Executive Officer Vanessa Cheng called it "a line in the sand moment not just for Christian schools, but for all people of faith and for the principle of religious freedom across Australia."

"If these ALRC recommendations are adopted, it means the government can tell Christian schools who we can employ, what we can believe and teach. It sets a scary precedent, and the question Australians need to ask is 'who's next'? Will they dictate to any other religious group or organisation what they can believe?"

She said the issue is not about discrimination but is about the right of parents to choose a school that teaches traditional Christian values and beliefs.

“Teachers and other employees who don’t share our faith or beliefs have the choice to work at many other educational options.”

She said that schools’ codes of conduct for teachers and staff reflect their faith beliefs and often include Christian teachings around sexuality and marriage, which are a core part of their faith.

“These core beliefs cannot be separated from our Christian faith and parents are choosing our schools for these values.”

ACS Executive Director Alistair Macpherson said that “International law and covenants, which Australia has ratified, recognise the importance of religious groups to be able to teach and practice their beliefs, and for parents to be able to choose schooling for children that aligns with their personal beliefs. It is time for government to recognise and support this fundamental human right, rather than facilitating this continued victimisation of religious groups and individuals.”

He said that political and social organisations employ people aligned with their values and beliefs and asked, “Why should faith-based organisations be singled out?”

“We are not asking anyone to share our faith or worldview, just to respect our faith and support the freedom of belief.”

Want to know more about the positive difference Christian teachers make in our schools everyday? Go to <https://www.christianschoolsaredifferent.com/> to read real life stories from teachers, students and parents.

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About the Associations:

Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) represents over a hundred independent Christian schools in every state and territory across Australia, ranging from very small to large; urban to regional, rural and remote. The majority of member schools are non-denominational with a protestant heritage and are governed by parent associations with over 44,000 students enrolled from a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Associated Christian Schools (ACS) represents over 45 independent Christian Schools throughout Queensland. With over 30,000 students attending member schools, this represents approximately 20% of the independent school students in Queensland. Whilst each of our member schools are independently governed, they choose to collaborate together through ACS, for the purpose of delivering high quality Christian education for the common good.

Christian Schools Australia (CSA) is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating over 86,000 students and employing more than 13,500 staff at more than 200 locations across Australia. CSA member schools provide caring and compassionate education within an authentic Christian learning community.