

Media Release



23 November 2021

Christian Schools Welcome Protections

Christian schools and their communities across Australia welcomed the release of the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2021*.

The Bill fulfills a promise made by the Prime Minister prior to the last Federal election and ensures that the full-suite of fundamental human rights now have protection in Commonwealth law.

As far back as July 1998 then Human Rights Commissioner Chris Sidoti in a report to the government, entitled Article 18, recommended that the *'Commonwealth Parliament should enact a Religious Freedom Act which, among other things, recognises and gives effect to the right to freedom of religion and belief'*. It may well be the most widely recommended action not previously taken to protect human rights in Australia.

'The release of the Bill is very welcomed,' said Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy for Christian Schools Australia, 'it is a vital first step in securing these long overdue and fundamental protections and we look forward to its introduction into Parliament.'

'We also welcome the Opposition Leader's comments in recent days that he "absolutely" supports religious freedom, this is very heartening,' he said, 'we completely agree with Mr Albanese that this "should not be a partisan issue".'

The Bill itself largely follows the pattern of other Commonwealth discrimination law, while also reflecting the importance of the communal nature of religious belief.

'Faith is lived out with others,' said Mr Spencer, 'any effective protection for religious belief or activity must protect that activity when conducted through religious bodies or schools.'

'Christian schools exist because of the hard work and sacrifice of ordinary, suburban Christian families over many years,' he said, 'these schools only exist because of that faith, and as an expression of that faith.'

'Just as "faith without works is dead", protections for that faith, without protections for the result of the works it leads to, are meaningless.'

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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.

