

Media Release



5 January 2022

A New Year, A New Review

The new year has started with more of the same for Christian schools and their communities, and people of faith more broadly across Australia.

The review of the Religious Discrimination Bill and associated bills by the Senate Legal & Constitutional Affairs Committee is the second review of the third iteration of this legislative package. It comes on top of the extensive independent review undertaken by the Expert Panel on Religious Freedom and more than two decades of reviews across the nation going to back to least 1998.

“Religious freedom must be the most analysed and reviewed human right in this country,” said Mark Spencer of Christian Schools Australia, “as far back as 1998 the then Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission recommended a federal Religious Freedom Act.”

“Just before Christmas the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights sought submissions for its review of this legislation, now we ‘celebrate’ the New Year by lodging another submission.”

“Despite the extensive ‘gaslighting’ around the Bill, it is a very simple question for our Federal MPs and Senators – do you support religious freedom or not?” he said.

Private polling* undertaken last year demonstrated the widespread support for the Bill’s protections - **more than 2 out of 3 Australians** believing that Australian laws should uphold and protect the universal human right to hold and practice religious beliefs.

There was also overwhelming support for faith-based schools, with **79% of Australians supporting the right of religious schools to employ teachers and other staff who support the values and beliefs of the school**, if those values and beliefs are clearly stated. This is a key element of the Bill and a vital protection for Christian schools.

“Let’s not forget the extensive investigation and reviews already undertaken,” Mr Spencer said, “we need to listen to the evidence and listen to the people of Australia.”

Christian Schools Australia lodged a joint submission with Adventist Schools Australia to the Senate Committee today.

ENDS

* Independent national polling of a weighted representative sample of 1515 Australians undertaken from 19 October 2021.

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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.

