

# Media Release



10 May 2022

## Our Plan for Freedom and Equality

‘The Parliament and the parties have failed people of faith and LGBT students’, says Christian Schools Australia Director of Public Policy, Mark Spencer, ‘so we have stepped in with a plan to solve the issues they have left unaddressed **by Christmas this year**’.

‘Despite the fear of expulsion created in LGBT students by LGBT activists being totally unfounded, it is sincerely felt and must be addressed’, he said, ‘as schools that genuinely care about students, we have consistently supported attempts to fairly address concerns’.

*Our Plan for Freedom and Equality* released today by Christian Schools Australia provides a clear three step process to protect people of faith from discrimination, address the fears of expulsion of LGBT students and provide certainty to faith-based schools. A copy of the Plan was sent to all MPs, Senators and key candidates yesterday evening.

The plan calls for the next Parliament to:

- Pass the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2022* as passed by the House of Representatives in February
- Immediately re-commence the ALRC Review into exemptions
- Pass amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act* that update the drafting as recommended by the ALRC

‘Parliament has had four years to address these issues, our plan will ensure that they are resolved in a little over four months’, Mr Spencer said.

‘Activists who claimed a ‘win’ when the Bill did not proceed in February, and those MPs who claimed to be protecting LGBT students, are the **only barrier to a solution** being implemented’.

‘**You cannot make claims to be supporting students without coming up with a concrete and realistic plan to address their concerns**’, he said.

‘Our plan is clear, detailed, and provides an achievable path for these matters to be resolved’, Mr Spencer said, ‘**political leaders need to support our plan** if they are genuine about finding a solution’.

‘MPs who voted to remove existing protections under the guise of protecting students need to **support our plan or provide their alternative plan** – not merely make vague claims to be protecting students, or supporting religious freedom.’

‘The time for talk is over, **we need a plan for action**’, Mr Spencer said.

ENDS

### For all media enquiries:

Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy  
[mspencer@csa.edu.au](mailto:m Spencer@csa.edu.au) | 0419 419 224

### 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.





9 May 2022

[TO: MPs / Senators / Key Candidates]

## **Our Plan for Freedom and Equality**

The time for vague promises, general statements supporting religious freedom, or simplistic assertions regarding supporting gay students is over.

As the people of Australia are starting to cast their vote, people of faith and LGBT students in faith-based schools and their families **deserve clarity on your plans** in the next Parliament.

The last Parliament failed us all. MPs voted in the early hours of 10 February to support amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act* under the guise of protecting LGBT students which were **previously rejected by Parliament** in 2018/2019 because of the unintended consequences.

The result:

- there are no Federal protections against religious discrimination and will not be until and unless a new government passes legislation after the Federal election, and
- there is no process to review the provisions in the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* which have been [falsely] claimed to result in students in faith-based schools being expelled merely on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Everyone lost** as a consequence of this failure by the last Parliament.

Leaders of both major parties have indicated that they support protections for BOTH people of faith and LGBT students, but more than talk is needed. As schools that genuinely care about students, we have consistently supported attempts to fairly address concerns, and have developed a plan to provide a solution.

Our **Plan for Freedom and Equality** attached provides a clear three step process to protect people of faith from discrimination, address the fears of expulsion of LGBT students and provide certainty to faith-based schools. It provides a clear, detailed, and achievable path for these matters to be resolved before Christmas this year.

With your support this plan can become **a reality** and all these **issues can be resolved** – **will you commit to supporting our plan?**

Mark Spencer  
Director of Public Policy

**Christian Schools Australia Limited**  
ACN 092 580 124

**Office** Suite 14, Level One, Manuka Arcade, 22 – 30 Franklin Street Manuka ACT  
**Mail** PO Box 3069 Manuka ACT 2603  
**Phone** (02) 6257 7989 **Fax** (02) 9887 4928

The last Parliament **failed**:

- X failed** to protect people of faith from discrimination
- X failed** to address the fears of expulsion in LGBT students
- X failed** to provide certainty to faith-based schools

Our plan for **Freedom and Equality** will ensure that the next Parliament solves all these issues **by Christmas**.

- » **Pass the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2022*** as passed by the House of Representatives in February
- » **Immediately** re-commence the ALRC Review into exemptions
- » **Pass amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act*** that update the drafting as recommended by the ALRC

Those who object to this plan are condemning people of faith and LGBT students to more uncertainty and anxiety – they have already been **waiting too long!**

### Our Plan in Detail

1.

**Pass the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2022*** as passed by the House of Representatives in February.

This Bill was the result of extensive consultation, two exposure drafts and was recommended by two Parliamentary Committees. We **don't need to create a new bill**, any improvements or amendments can be considered when it is reviewed in two years time as provided for in the Bill. The *Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021* should also be resubmitted and passed.

2.

**Immediately** re-commence the ALRC Review into exemptions.

As soon as the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2022* is passed the ALRC should re-commence their *Review into the Framework of Religious Exemptions in Anti-discrimination Legislation*, for which some preliminary work was already undertaken in 2019. This should be completed by the current ALRC President given her background and earlier involvement. A report should be expected **within three months** after the passage of the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2022*.

3.

**Pass amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act*** that update the drafting as recommended by the ALRC.

On receipt of the ALRC recommendations the Government should alter the *Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2021* to include the existing amendments to other legislation along with the ALRC recommendations to update the drafting of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* to **better balance religious freedom and equality rights**.

Only our plan for **Freedom and Equality** will ensure that these issues can be addressed this year.