

Media Release



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Can This Government Deliver Fundamental Protections?

Christian schools have welcomed the commencement of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review into exemptions for religious educational institutions in Federal anti-discrimination law.

‘Since 2018 Christian schools have sought to have the current exemptions reviewed and modernised’, said Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy at Christian Schools Australia.

‘The current exemptions are confusing and **have allowed activists to create a climate of fear** amongst LGBT students in faith-based schools with their false claims about expulsion’, he said.

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

‘The amended Terms of Reference release by the Commonwealth Attorney-General today highlight the need to address both the desire to eliminate discrimination and the necessity for Christian schools to **build a community of faith through the selection of suitable staff**’.

The Terms of Reference specifically recognise the need to align with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) to which Australia is a signatory. Article 18(4) of the ICCPR requires that governments ‘*have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions*’.

‘Parents **continue to flock to Christian schools** seeking an education that reflects their values and beliefs’, Mr Spencer said, ‘exercising their fundamental **rights protected in international law**’.

‘We are pleased that the Albanese Government recognises this fundamental right, and that updated legislation will be consistent with these rights and freedom’.

‘Alongside addressing the **long overdue need to provide clarity and certainty** in this area, we are calling on the Government to release draft Religious Discrimination legislation as soon as possible’, Mr Spencer said, ‘we saw earlier this year that Parliament is unlikely to pass legislation that **provides only part of the solution**’.

‘The release of draft Religious Discrimination legislation will ensure that people of faith across Australia can make informed decisions about the full proposals from the Government’.

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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.

