



Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

25 October 2018

Open Letter to All Members of Parliament of Australia

As Principals and Heads of Anglican Schools in Greater Sydney and the Illawarra we write this public letter to all members of Parliament of Australia.

There has been quite some discussion recently about the rights of faith-based schools and their current exemptions under federal anti-discrimination legislation. The debate has been polemicalised as the right to expel gay students, with little evidence that this occurs, and the right to dismiss gay staff members, again with little evidence that this occurs.

By and large across faith-based schools, the issue at hand is the right to employ staff who support the ethos of the school. Some schools require evidence of an active faith that is consistent with the philosophy and ethos of the school. In other schools, there is a preference for employment of active adherents of the faith, but other staff, who may not personally identify with the faith, are still expected to support the overarching mission and ethos of the school. This is not inconsistent with the practice of most employers and their corporate goals, let alone political parties. It is overly simplistic to state that a teacher merely delivers academic content in the classroom. This ignores the powerful mentor and exemplar role all teachers play, and are expected to play, in the education of young people. Therefore, it is essential that a teacher supports the values, ethos and mission of the school as much as he or she can. It is not appropriate, for example, for a teacher to undermine or denigrate the beliefs and teachings of an employing school. This is a reasonable expectation not only of the employing school but also of many parents and families who have chosen the school for their children's education.

There is no effective protection under Australian law that guarantees religious freedom for both belief and action. This is strange given that it is enshrined in the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Australia has formally ratified. The current exemptions, however clumsy, in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 are really the only significant legal protections available to schools to maintain their ethos and values with regard to core issues of faith. A more general positive right would be far better, but until such time as religious freedom is codified in legislation, the exemptions should remain.

Signatories of Heads of Schools overleaf.

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NAMES OF SCHOOLS AND HEADS

Mrs Megan Krimmer
Headmistress
Abbotsleigh

Mr Graham Anderson
Principal
Arden Anglican School

Dr Gareth Leechman
Principal
Arndell Anglican School

Mr Phillip Heath
Headmaster
Barker College

Mrs Megan Hastie
Acting Head
Blue Mountains Grammar School

Mr Don O'Connor
Headmaster
Broughton Anglican College

Mr Douglas Thomas
Principal
Claremont College

Mrs Maryanne Davis
Principal
Danebank Anglican School

Dr David Nockles
Headmaster
Macarthur Anglican School

Mr Craig Mansour
Headmaster
Macquarie Anglican Grammar School

Mrs Cathie Graydon
Principal
Mamre Anglican School

Dr Julie Greenhalgh
Principal
Meriden School

Mr Garry Brown OAM
Headmaster
Mosman Preparatory School

Mrs Lorrae Sampson
Principal
Nowra Anglican College

Mrs Naomi Wilkins
Principal
Oran Park Anglican College

The Rev Louis Stringer
Headmaster
Orange Anglican Grammar School

Mrs Felicity Grima
Acting Head
Penrith Anglican College

Mr Paul Cockrem
Principal
Richard Johnson Anglican School

Ms Deb Magill
Principal
Roseville College

Mr Peter Fowler
Principal
Rouse Hill Anglican College

Mr Anthony Cummings
Principal
Shellharbour Anglican College

Dr John Collier
Head of School
St Andrew's Cathedral School

Dr Julie Townsend
Headmistress
St Catherine's School

Mrs Jann Robinson
Principal
St Luke's Grammar School

Mr Brendan Gorman
Headmaster
St Peter's Anglican Primary School

Dr Tim Wright
Headmaster
Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore)

Mrs Susan Middlebrook
Principal
Tara Anglican School for Girls

Mr Tony George
Headmaster
The King's School

Mr Ross Whelan
Principal
Thomas Hassall Anglican College

Mrs Gaynor MacKinnon
Principal
Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College

Mr Tim Bowden
Headmaster
Trinity Grammar School

Mrs Judith Nealy
Head
The Illawarra Grammar School

Dr Scott Marsh
Headmaster
William Clarke College

Dr Stuart Quarmby
Headmaster
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