

MEDIA RELEASE



26 March 2024

Catholic school parents seek choice – not discrimination.

Recently, the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) tabled its report *Maximising the Realisation of Human Rights: Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Laws* and its recommendations will have significant impact on faith-based education in Australia.

Catholic School Parents Australia, as the peak body representing all families in Catholic Schools do not support the recommendations made in the report to remove religious exemptions, and find them concerning.

We appreciate this is a complex and sensitive issue, however it cannot be denied that when a parent chooses to send their child to a Catholic school, they are choosing the values and ethos of Catholicism as well. The expectation is that the staff within our Catholic schools, at the very least, uphold the values and beliefs of our faith.

We believe that Catholic schools throughout Australia have been managing a good balance in remaining inclusive and non-discriminatory without straying from the foundational beliefs and values of our religion.

However, the recommendations in the recent ALRC report would mean that Catholic schools could not seek to employ staff that hold the same religious values and beliefs as it would be deemed discriminatory.

In 2023, the Albanese Government committed to religious freedom in its party platform to 'support the right of all Australians to have and to manifest their religion or beliefs, and the right of religious organisations to act in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of their faith.'

The removal of religious exemptions in faith-based education should concern all parents of children in Catholic schools. It has the potential to erase the importance of our faith within the education system and to minimise the many reasons the parents of over 800,000 children choose an Australian Catholic school for their children's education.

It is our intention to ensure the Albanese Government knows that parents of children attending Catholic schools want the beliefs, values and ethos of the Catholic faith upheld in our Catholic schools. For us, that means that staff within our schools respect those same values so that our children are nurtured consistently across all aspects of their education.

Andrea Obeyesekere
Chairperson, Catholic School Parents Australia

CSPA is the national, peak body for the parents/carers of the 804,618 children and young people in Australia's 1,760 Catholic schools. One in every five Australian students is educated in a Catholic school.

Media Contact: John O'Brien – CSPA Executive Officer (Mobile: 0428 283 754)