
MEDIA RELEASE

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Government must stand up for freedom of belief

The Federal Government has been urged by Christian school groups not to allow LGBTIQ+ lobby groups to attack people of faith and divert the discussion around religious freedom.

The groups, which represent schools chosen by parents of more than 150,000 students, say that Christian schools don't discipline students due to their sexuality or gender, and that their faith compels them to treat all students with love and respect.

Christian Schools Australia director of public policy Mark Spencer said he can point to many examples of students with diverse backgrounds and experiences who have thrived at Christian schools, and that it's "morally wrong" to use the personal experiences of a few students to try and "end Christian education as we know it."

"We don't want to see any student have a negative experience at a Christian school, or indeed any other school. The unfortunate reality though is that students experience bullying at other schools, both religious and public across Australia for all sorts of reasons. We know from school principals that parents often turn to Christian schools because we are known for our care and compassion."

"Care and compassion doesn't always mean we will agree. Activists are trying to force their beliefs on Christian schools."

"Faith-based schools are communities of faith, and provide a holistic faith-based education. We must therefore be able to employ people who support and practice our beliefs," he explained.

Mr Spencer said this was not only reasonable, but a fundamental human right enshrined in the international treaties to which Australia is a signatory.

Australian Association of Christian Schools executive officer Vanessa Cheng said LGBTIQ+ lobby groups are trying to redefine discrimination.

"Holding a different belief is not discrimination," she said, adding "lobby groups and political parties are free to employ people who agree with and support what they believe, which we say is fair enough too."

"Parents who choose Christian education do so with the knowledge that they will be taught by those who agree with the Christian beliefs of the school.

Ms Cheng also questioned why teachers and staff who oppose Christian beliefs would want to work in a Christian school where they would be expected to teach the core doctrines of the faith, lead devotions and pray for students.

“It’s all about protecting freedom of choice within the independent educational sector. Teachers who don’t align with our values and beliefs can find a different school within a system they can work within,” she said, pointing out that parents have this choice too.

Christian schools continue to call for a bipartisan approach to religious freedom laws and protections to allow faith-based schools to continue providing quality education to hundreds of thousands of Australian parents who make this choice for their children.

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About the Associations:

Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) represents over a hundred independent Christian schools in every state and territory across Australia, ranging from very small to large; urban to regional, rural and remote. The majority of member schools are non-denominational with a protestant heritage and are governed by parent associations with over 44,000 students enrolled from a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Christian Schools Australia (CSA) is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating over 86,000 students and employing more than 13,500 staff at more than 200 locations across Australia. CSA member schools provide caring and compassionate education within an authentic Christian learning community.