

NT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BILL IGNORES CONCERNS OF GRASSROOTS CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

14 OCTOBER 2022

The Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACCS) is shocked by the *Anti-Discrimination Bill 2022* introduced by Attorney-General Chansey Paech yesterday which completely removes the ability of religious schools to preference staff on the basis of religious belief or activity in employment decisions.

The NT Government has not listened to the concerns raised by faith groups during the consultation period and has instead chosen to radically depart from the Draft Bill first circulated in August by repealing the Religious Educational Institutions Employment Exemption (s 37A), which was never on the table.

AACS urges the Fyles Labor Government to demonstrate its commitment to diversity and religious tolerance in the Northern Territory by listening to faith groups before passing this deeply flawed Bill.

Quotes attributable to AACCS Executive Officer, Vanessa Cheng

“Christian schools across Australia expect all staff, from the Principal to the Music teacher, to share and practice the faith of the school.”

“If this Bill passes, the Northern Territory will be the only Australian jurisdiction without legal protection for religious schools in employment matters.”

“How can NT Christian schools maintain their distinctive ethos and values if they are unable to select staff who share the beliefs of the school?”

“This Bill puts the NT Labor Government at odds with its Federal Labor counterpart which has been engaging in good faith to ensure faith-based schools are protected through a Federal Religious Discrimination Act.”

Quote attributable to NT Christian Schools CEO, Phoebe van Bentum

“NT Christian Schools have a policy of employing only Christian staff. We believe this provides the best faith-based learning environment for our students and is supported and understood by parents who choose our schools.”

“Our schools make positive contribution to the NT educational sector by serving remote Aboriginal communities, such as Elcho Island, as well as multicultural communities in Greater Darwin, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy. We are extremely disappointed the government does not respect our faith-based model of education and is proposing to remove the legal protections we rely upon.”

Media contact:

Vanessa Cheng (AACCS)
0416 277 372