

Dear Committee

With regard to your deliberations on the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Removing Discrimination Against Students) Bill 2018.

Because there has been no media reporting that any student has been expelled from any school as a result of their gender identity, Australians are aware that your committee has an alternative goal in mind.

If this is in error, then it is clearly up to the government to correct that misapprehension, and to do so before your committee deliberates. If this is not in error, then if something isn't broken, there is no need to fix it.

Clearly a faith-based school might have greater reason (in the atheist secular mind only) for wanting to divest itself of a student who did not submit to its ethos. This has not yet occurred and is most likely **not** to occur **because** it is a faith based school. This logic may be foreign to a faith based on atheism but is nevertheless correct.

The Australian census indicates that about 70% of Australians identify with a particular religion. Most of those religions have educational systems which promote their own ethos. Atheists certainly do. Australia has fought and died in wars to achieve that freedom. It would take great political courage to spurn that.

The open political activity Federally and in a few states is apparently opposed to maintaining freedom of religion and its practice. Australians were promised, prior to the postal vote on same sex marriage, that there would be no adverse consequences to redefining what marriage was. As an Australian who voted 'no', I am adversely offended by that result, and am equally concerned about the direction that your committee appears to be taking in restricting Australian religious freedoms.

I have grandchildren in religious schools. Any restriction which was intended to hinder the open and free expression of that religion is a betrayal of the Government's own promises. The imposition of any government programme on a religious school which was directly contrary to their beliefs is unacceptable. It would be similar to the Government insisting that Labor use Liberal candidates in the next election.

Lastly, the UN Charter of Human Rights – to which Australia was an early signatory – is explicit in stating that parents – not the government – are directly responsible for the health, welfare and education of their own children. Governments interfere in this responsibility at their own peril.

Yours Faithfully

Andrew Hodge M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.S