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Sex Discrimination Amendment (Removing Discrimination Against Students) Bill 2018

I am a 53 year old homosexual man who grew up in Country South Australia, and was bullied at school for being gay (many years before I even understood what being gay was – and bullied for almost 5 years before I actually realised I was gay). This caused me a great deal of confusion and a very difficult start to my young adulthood.

Pure and simple. Australia has (embedded in its constitution) separation of state and religion. We are a non-secular country. Discrimination based on religious views therefore has no place in our statutes.

While children may grow up in a religious family (of ANY denomination), the child is expected (by the family) to follow that family religion. Accordingly they may be placed into a school which is predominantly for people of that religious denomination.

It is widely accepted (and scientifically proven) that Homosexuality, Transsexualism, and Intersex conditions, are things which are not able to be controlled by the child. They are dealt these attributes by nature, basically dictated by the genes that the child has inherited.

If indeed the religious people and organisations actually believed that everyone is the child of god, or that god created everyone, then they must also accept that god creates people who are homosexual, transsexual and intersex.

For a religion to have greater say over the child's ability to be given an education, and being supported by society, is simply wrong. They are indeed holding themselves and their views higher than that of their god, or nature itself.

Having grown up in rural Australia, there were 4 kids in my year throughout school that never made it to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. 3 of them were gay and lesbian. Why did that happen? Society as a whole mocks, tortures and torments homosexuals and trans people on a daily basis. Entrenching prejudice and discrimination in law, gives some people the authority to continue their hate, torment and bad treatment of this minority.

The official change to the Marriage Act has sent an initial message that Homosexual, Transsexual and Intersex people are equal to others. Now it's time to remove the discriminatory laws that allow discrimination against Homosexual, Transsexual and Intersex people on the basis of religious views. After all – another religious view of pretty much EVERY religion is to “love they neighbour” and to “live and let live”. It would be far better for them to hold onto those tennents than to discriminatory ones that actually hurt people, and have negative consequences for their health and mental wellbeing.

Remove discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity from ALL our laws. Not just for school kids – but also for staff of the schools as well. Institutions that discriminate against our citizens deserve no public funding.

Stephen Mattsson