

Appendix 4

Survey questions and sample of responses

The survey received 48,107 responses in total. For each question respondents were asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' and could choose to respond with 'why' or 'why not'.

- 1. Do you believe there should be legislation to protect people from religious discrimination in certain areas of public life on the grounds of their religious belief or activity? This will include protecting people who don't hold a religious belief as well.**

Yes: 94.91 per cent; No: 5.09 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

As Australian we have always protected the right of everyone to have their own opinion/belief. I believe that is what democracy is all about. Other countries have put protections in place. I see my beliefs are as who I am as a Human something that is fundamental to my existence. Life has become complicated our heritage is no longer to only norm now we need it spelled out in law and protected what it means to be human.

Everyone has a right to believe what they choose to believe. No one should have to be discriminated for what they choose to believe in. For some, religious practices can be a comfort and help others find support when they need it.

My faith impacts every aspect of my life, my concern is that there is a lack of national protection for those of faith. I believe the Bill needs to be passed to protect religious freedom and to fill the gap that currently exists in Commonwealth discrimination law.

Everybody has a right to their own beliefs and should not be prevented from sharing them and living them out from fear of discrimination and legal action as we have begun to witness in recent times.

Yes, because without this law of protection, people who have religious belief or activity will not be treated or regarded fairly, and with respect. Their freedom in equal participation in public life, to believe, or to act religiously, would be taken away from them, and that is unjust way to treat fellow human beings for any human society or community.

Religious belief (or unbelief) is a human right in a free society. We are also a litigious society, so legislation on what does (or doesn't) constitute religious discrimination has now become a necessity for the protection of people who are simply acting in accord with their rightful (and legal) religious beliefs. It will promote harmony and social order.

Yes, there should be legislation to protect people from religious discrimination in certain areas of public life on the grounds of their religious belief or activity; just like there is protection for many other areas and activities.

This is crucial as religious belief shapes a world view and in a multicultural society varying and even opposing views need to be free to be voiced. To seek a plateau of views essentially robs our society of competing and varying ideas.

I think people should be able to practice their faith without discrimination and not be forced to go against their beliefs either in private or in public.

Religious belief is endemic to man, and people should have the freedom to practice what they believe without fear of prosecution. Not everyone will agree with everyone else, this just isn't possible.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

Various State and Federal laws already exist to protect religious beliefs and activities. No further protection is required. Furthermore, working in public life comes with responsibilities and consequences which should be upheld regardless of personal belief.

Religion is an idea not a characteristic. There are already laws in place to protect people following and practicing their beliefs as long as it doesn't impact others.

If Australia had a "charter of freedoms and responsibilities" which included freedom of speech, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender, etc (and maybe stupidity), there would be no need for an individual Bill for each specific condition considered as a necessity for being human and alive to become our full potential. It is too difficult to lay out all the conditions of being human needing to be outside the law.

I believe our current laws are sufficient in protecting religious freedom and in fact our laws already grant greater and unfair privilege to the religious. I do

not believe this additional Bill is necessary to further privilege the religious. On many levels the Bill continually fails to acknowledge the rights of the non-religious. The Bill even seeks to pit larger religions against smaller religions. I believe the Bill is divisive and seeks to identify people religiously, instead of just seeing us as people first. There has certainly been no consideration given to equality for all people.

To my old mind this is a loaded question, you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. Why only refer it to people in public life? Legislation must protect all society. We all share the same planet. We are taught by a higher being to live in peace and harmony with each other.

I believe that there should be Freedom of Religion legislation to allow people of faith to live their lives in accordance with their genuinely held religious beliefs. The current religious discrimination legislation package is marketed at doing this but does not actually do so. The current religious discrimination legislation package extends to protect those that expressly don't hold a religious belief, so the legislation is at best confusing and at worse disingenuous. There are also so many exceptions and conditions in the legislation package curtailing/restricting a person who has a genuine religious faith to live in accordance with their religious belief, that religious people have in reality little protection to live their lives in accordance with their faith.

I believe that there should be Freedom of Religion legislation to allow people of faith to live their lives in accordance with their genuinely held religious beliefs peaceably and in harmony with everyone else. This legislation does not do this. It is important to recall that the impetus for this legislation was the concern that people of faith had with the passing of the Same Sex marriage amendment. (i.e., It was promised that legislation would be passed to protect people with a religious belief, (whose religious beliefs did not allow them to agree with same sex marriage), giving them the freedom to practice their faith and not be discriminated against. This current Bill goes much further than this mandate. This is not only confusing but is also disingenuous to those who think that this legislation is being enacted to protect those who profess an actual religious faith. (Please see the definitions of Statement of Belief and Religious Belief which includes those "without a religious belief").

2. We currently have a Sex Discrimination Act, Age Discrimination Act and Racial Discrimination Act, do you believe it is important to also have a Religious Discrimination Act as well?

Yes: 93.64 per cent; No: 6.36 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

Yes. Freedom of religion (including the right to manifest that religion) is a human right and ought to be protected. The most important reason is that people who are religious ought to be able to hold and practise their religion without fear of persecution. As a Christian, I don't feel like I have a "choice" to hold the views I do or live my life according to the Bible. To me, being a Christian is living out what is objectively true. To reject certain tenets because they are unpopular would be accepting lies... There is a misplaced animosity toward religion (esp. Christianity) that has grown at the same time the LGBTIQ+ movement has gained mainstream traction. There is no reason why religion should be sidelined - in certain and very important ways, particular religious beliefs challenge the worldviews offered by some in the LGBTIQ+ movement (and more broadly, the secular world), and that is definitely not a bad thing. As a society, we cannot make progress by silencing different voices and perspectives for the sake of paternalistic 'safetyism' (see Jonathan Haidt & Greg Lukianoff's 'The Coddling of the American Mind'). It compromises our ability to engage in a robust dialectic, and fosters tribalism and extremism. We need to be able to disagree civilly and respectfully in order to grow as individuals and make social progress. We need to enrich the next generation's engagement with the plethora of perspectives and discourse, rather than to encourage them to think of people who offer alternative views as "violent" and their words as "unsafe". We also need to ensure that religion remains available to them, and is viewed as good and valuable, rather than as a set of worldviews that are inherently violent or unsafe. If we fail to protect religious freedom, we will alienate religious people, who form a significant proportion of the Australian population. We will also fail our broader community by allowing the silencing of differing voices, which enrich our cultural and social fabric and discourse.

In the same way that we protect the individual regarding sex, age and race we should protect the beliefs of religious people. It is very important to have a Religious Discrimination Act in Australia as 69.5% of the people indicated they are religious or have faith in the last census.

A Religious Discrimination Act matches existing protections under other Discrimination Acts. It contributes to protections and further affirms people's right to live free of discrimination. Religious freedom is increasingly threatened or erased under State law, so the Federal government should ensure consistency and fairness in this area.

The religious discrimination bill fills a gap in Commonwealth discrimination law. Australia has an obligation to protect religious freedom under

international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Many people, even in Australia, consider their religious beliefs one of the main, if not the main, defining features as a person. These beliefs, in many cases, address the big questions of life, provide a sense of purpose, and guide relationships with other people. In this sense, they cross boundaries of other defining features, such as sex, age or ethnicity, encompassing them. If these features have been deemed worthy of protection, I believe so much more are religious beliefs. (Note: I believe agnostic or atheist beliefs are also valid and worthy of protection. But they don't seem to be under any kind of opposition, not in Australia anyway.)

In the absence of a bill of rights there would seem to be no other way of protecting the fundamental and crucial right of freedom to practice one's religion. It is important that religious institutions such as schools and hospitals be allowed to maintain their ethos through freedom to employ staff that share the beliefs of the institution and also be allowed to display artifacts, art work and emblems.

The cancel culture of the 21st century demands that religious beliefs be protected. Regretfully, most citizens don't realise our whole history is underpinned by Judeo Christian beliefs. If they are not protected, we will lose them and we will be poorer off society.

Along with age, race and sex the outstanding element that is a common point of discrimination is religion. Religion has been a pivotal part of many cultures. When committed to a religion people are willing to die for their beliefs. Introducing the Religious Discrimination Act will give believers of all religion a piece of mind when it comes to celebrating all elements of their culture and beliefs.

It was a 2019 election promise, and for credibility it needs to be in place before the next election. Current protections in Commonwealth, state and territory laws for discrimination on the basis of a personal religious belief or activity are piecemeal, have limited application and are inconsistent across jurisdictions. This package will address the gaps. It is necessary to ensure that all people are able to hold and manifest their faith, or lack thereof, in public without interference or intimidation. It would bring legislative protections for religious belief and activity to the same standard as those already afforded under federal anti-discrimination law to discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, family responsibilities,

marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent or immigrant status.

Because we already see people being discriminated against because of their religious beliefs, being abused because they disagree with something. Once people could disagree without a problem now it's becoming violent in some situations.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

I believe protections already exist and should be clarified under existing legislation. Sex and race are things we cannot control for nor dictate how we should act towards people. Religions often have discrimination as part of their teachings and I do not want to create a separate group of people who are exempt from current anti-discrimination laws.

Religion is an idea not a characteristic. There are already laws in place to protect people following and practicing their beliefs as long as it doesn't impact others.

I don't believe in the right to discriminate against people based on my religious views. This proposed bill is designed to give people the right to discriminate based on sex, age, race, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Sex, age and race are innate. Religion on the other hand is by choice (or indoctrination after birth). I strongly believe that everyone has a right to their own religious belief or non-belief. And that each individual should have the freedom to practice that religious belief or non-belief to the extent that it does not impose on or harm others and is within the law.

Because there is no evidence of a problem with existing laws that need fixing by an RDA, particularly an Act which is so patently a protection for institutions wanting exemptions from laws protecting actual human rights.

There are already so many laws. If we can uphold the rights of people of faith to practise their faith, and to maintain their institutions (e.g. palliative care, religious gatherings, schools, social care) without extra Acts, I would prefer this. Our society too quickly turns to legislation.

3. Do you support the religious discrimination legislative package that is currently before the Parliament?

Yes: 81.82 per cent; No: 18.18 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

I believe an appropriate balance has been struck between protecting holding and expressing religious belief alongside minimizing or preventing such protections from being used maliciously.

If the Bill is intended to afford power to schools/entities to employ persons who can both express and be held to account for a set of beliefs and activities in accordance with a statement of faith, I can support it's intent. It should not be a mechanism to restrict access to all services that might be available in a community (broadly) to a person.

Yes, it is a good start, however there the bill could go further and be more robust in its protections. It is also critical to keep the protection for faith-based schools to teach and operate their schools in accordance with their religious beliefs in 38(3) of the Sex Discrimination Act.

The package is a moderate response to the increasing vilification and discrimination now being routinely directed towards people of faith in Australia. It is better than nothing but does not go far enough in protecting these freedoms.

There has been thorough consultation, and the package as it stands is good, and reflects submissions already made during the consultation process; it should not be tampered with at the last minute by politicians. People who have contributed to the process will feel betrayed if the package is watered down, especially of this is by individuals wanting to score political points.

It is a well-reasoned response to an increasingly secular society that not only chooses not to hold any religious beliefs but seeks to prevent people from holding and living by their own beliefs.

While we have reservations about the Bill, we ask you to support it. We do not want freedoms for religious people watered down by amendments. We are concerned that the "Folau" clause, which was in previous drafts of the Bill, has been removed. It would have prevented a person from being sacked for expressing their moral views on issues like marriage, even if expressed outside

of work hours. Protection for religious identity must be preserved and must not be overridden by secular laws imposing views on marriage, family and sexuality that are hostile to a person's religious beliefs.

The religious discrimination package currently before the parliament brings religious discrimination in line with the legislation on sex, age and racial discrimination. This is of critical importance in providing a balance consideration for the wellbeing of the nation.

Without this bill, there is the potential for people of certain beliefs to be ostracised even to the point of exclusion from the workplace, roles in community leadership, and various other avenues of society on the basis of their particular belief. This leads to situations as extreme as the Coptics in Egypt, Falun Gong in China, and in its extreme, Jews in 1940s Germany.

It is very important that religious institutions (including places of worship, faith-based organisations, religious schools/hospitals/nursing homes and religious support services for the general public) are all permitted by the Religious Discrimination Act 2021 to employ people who adhere to the same faith of the religious organisation itself so that these institutions can continue to represent the people of faith that set them up and for those who participate to do so in good conscience that they will not be required by law to function in a way that contravenes their religious beliefs. It is also important that those who choose to send their children to faith-based schools can be confident that those who work at such schools will faithfully teach and model the faith to which the school is committed. However, the Religious Discrimination Act 2021 needs to include extra protections for individuals of faith to be able to speak respectfully about their beliefs in both private and public settings and online without being verbally or legally targeted for their beliefs.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

This legislation goes beyond merely protecting persons from discrimination. It authorised religious persons and institutions to discriminate against those who do not share their belief system. This has no place where public money is used to support those institutions - such as schools and hospitals. Receiving public money to permit such institutions to operate necessitates that those institutions and organisations must not discriminate against those outside of their belief system.

It sets religion above other rights, and other belief systems. It entrenches the privilege that religion has seen since this country's discovery. At one time we

thought that religion benefited society and privileged it accordingly, but we have seen that religious groups have caused much damage in the past (see the Royal Commission for example) and we shouldn't be extending their status in society. Even the Ruddock report found minimal examples of religious discrimination, and this far exceeds anything needed to tackle that. It also privileges buildings and organisations (which themselves have no beliefs, even if their members do), and allows them the right to discriminate against otherwise protected classes, even when accepting taxpayer funding to provide government services.

The legislation decreases protections for those of no faith or those whose lifestyle may not match the religious beliefs of others. We currently have a situation where successful job application is no longer based solely on merit but on compliance with the religious beliefs of some organisations as well. This legislation will further weaken EEO opportunities in religious institutions/ organisations. There has not been enough Parliamentary oversight/ review to exclude any potential loopholes that may open others up to Discrimination from religious organisations.

There needs to be consideration of the current medical environment in Australia. The vaccine mandates are contrary to many people's religious beliefs and are preventing them from observing their religion freely and without exclusion from services available to the rest of the population. Religious exemption to medical procedures should be available.

Shocking legislation. It should not be voted on before the next election. It has not been thought through carefully, and will cause distress to vulnerable people.

I feel it's diluted down...once upon a time having a religious foundation was considered the basis for building wholesome family values, tolerance, compassion and so forth. Now the religious fabric of our country has become so battered that it's led to the breakdown of both family systems and social behaviours.

It is too vague. It will not properly protect individuals from prosecution, abuse, loss of income etc if they want to talk about their beliefs.

It is not needed. The vast majority of people in Australia support the right of the minority of committed religious people to practice their faith. Australians are tolerant of religion. The only time people become intolerant is when there

is hateful speech, child abuse and discrimination against vulnerable groups. Australians can and should stand up to religious views that urge discrimination against people's fundamental human rights. For example, being LGBTQIA. Another example, is LGBTQIA students or teachers. There should be strong protections in place to prevent discrimination. Religion should never be a shield for human rights abuse. A particular concern is that the majority of Australians are not religious, and it is essential that everyone can access public services without having to deal with religion.

4. Do you believe that parents should be able to choose to send their children to a school of their choice which aligns with their religious values?

Yes: 98.5 per cent; No: 1.5 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

Of course. That is why parents do that and pay the extra cost, because the public school system has no notion of morality and actively pursues an immoral position. If public schools just stuck with reading, writing and arithmetic there wouldn't be a problem but they don't. They only want to indoctrinate our children with their own corrupting secular values. But it is even more than secular it is now clearly hostile to any notion of God.

It gives them a chance to ensure that the children are exposed to adults or authority figures who are, ideally, conducting their lives in accordance with the beliefs of their religion. Ideally it offers the chance to show that sincere individuals can co-exist and show respect and tolerance to each other, even when their religious beliefs differ.

A parent is the person responsible for their own child and how they are taught and brought up. A child is not property of the state. Of course, a parent should be able to choose the values and beliefs that are instilled in their child alongside, and intertwined with, their education. Schools and teachers are employees of the parent (using the taxes they have paid, along with their own funds in the case of private schools), and parents have every right to choose how their child will be educated. If parents decide to send their child to a religious school, it is because they want something different or additional to what a secular public school provides, and that should be totally up to them.

It is the role of a parent to guide, protect, and direct their children in the way that they believe will be most beneficial to their child and to their growth as a contributing member of society. Parents must have the choice so that they can't lose their voice in the early years of their children's development.

However, such schools should not be permitted to proselytise children and should accommodate children from all religious backgrounds if they accept government funding.

It's a parent's job to raise their children in the way they should go, a lot of this stems from their schooling and education environments, parents should be able to make decisions surrounding where they send their children in the same way we make other daily decisions for the safety & upbringing of our children.

If schools are able to exist that provide religious instruction, then parents should be free to choose. Making all options available to people empowers them to make better decisions. I fully support ethics classes in schools for those that want to teach their children moral decency and community minded thinking. (we can ignore for the moment that without religious grounds behind such ethics the basis for ethics does not actually exist).

Each parent has the duty and privilege to love and train their children. Religion will usually inform and direct those values which the parents instil in their children. Therefore, schools aligned to their religion should be accessible as part of their children's training. Non-religious parents already have that option in our public school system.

A family has their own religion. Schools that align with their religious values will allow children to explore and practice this religion. It is up to the child once they are of understanding to choose to comply or deny their parent's beliefs.

Children need the security of consistent teaching from parents and teachers. This provides a basis for them if they wish to consider the alternatives after school that will face them in a multicultural society. Social media is already bombarding them with a minefield of ethical choices. Children need to be grounded in a belief framework which they understand and can apply in their lives.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

Children should be free to make up their own minds, not forced into a religion by a school. Children should be protected by the state, not indoctrinated, and abused. Children have human rights too.

I do not believe that schools should be an extension of religious institutions. If parents want to teach their children their religion, they can do so at home or in

their church communities. Schools should be left to teach all the other subjects. So we should not have religious schools.

Whilst I acknowledge religious schools, my firm belief is that all children should be given a broad-based view of religion. The opportunity for specific instruction in a specific creed is the responsibility of parents, not teachers.

The curriculum should be the same, no matter what school parents chose. Children should be taught how to think and not what to think.

I think that education should serve the purposes of social cohesion and egalitarianism, among others. Religious schools naturally strengthen division and sow social discord.

All children should receive a well-rounded secular education and be exposed to a wide range of ideas and ideologies. Religious education should be an extracurricular activity (not conducted by schools).

Not if this means they will discriminate against people on the basis of who they are. This is not religion - this is out and out discrimination. Religions used to argue that people of colour were inferior and God did not want them to mix with white people. Presumably this would now be acceptable once again under this law. No-one should be discriminated against on the basis of who they are. Schools should only have this right if they are fully self-funded. Taxpayer funds must not be used to discriminate.

Education should be a wholly secular activity. The idea that a child needs to be educated through a religious context flies in face of all the hard won scientific knowledge we have acquired over the centuries; despite religious intervention. If parents wish for their child to be educated in their chosen religion that should be done entirely separately to their formal education. I see no justifiable reason why their education in maths need be delivered by someone who happens to share their parents religious views.

- 5. Do you consider that religious schools should be able to require all students to practice the religion affiliated with that school, if this requirement is necessary to avoid injury to the religious susceptibilities of people of that religion?**

Yes: 79.81 per cent; No: 20.19 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

If a parent sends their child to an Islamic school, it is reasonable to assume that they are agreeable to their child having to conform to the religious practices of that school. It would be odd for Hindu parents who send their child to an Islamic school to object to their child being expected to conform to Islamic practices. I note that the question is asking about 'beliefs'. This might have elicited a different answer.

If a school is based and representing a particular faith it makes sense that school should be free to expect students to practice their particular religion. Parents are free to send their child somewhere more suitable if this does not align with their religious beliefs. The school should be able to make this a requirement of entry on their enrolment so there should not be any misunderstandings or misconceptions. There are many faith-based schools that don't have strict religious requirements.

In much the same way you would expect a construction worker to comply to certain rules to get a job done safely - if a Religious Education Institution has requirements to deliver the curriculum and 'delivery of service' they have implemented, then they should be allowed to enforce certain expectations.

Families should be expected to adhere to the codes of conduct/behavioural expectations and religious beliefs/practices that align with the school they have chosen to enroll their children in. Where religious schools hold particular beliefs based on their faith, these schools (and their families) would suffer great injury if they were not able to protect the beliefs that are important to their faith. There are numerous educational options available to families who do not wish to align themselves with religion - which logically serves to remove this tension for religious schools.

I think it's fair that if students are enrolled in a particular school of their choice, they also choose to follow the requirements of being part of the school. As long as this is clear in the application process and both students and parents understand what is being asked of them, and they choose to sign up to this willingly, then I think it's acceptable for the school to have certain requirements in place to build and develop their culture.

In order for a religious school to create an environment that is consistent with the beliefs of that religion, it should be possible to require students to behave in a way that is consistent with that religion, bearing in mind that they will always have access to public schools or private unaffiliated schools.

This question goes to what "religious susceptibilities" means. Students enrolled in a religious school should respect the "genuine" beliefs of the faith the school is affiliated with. If a student doesn't respect the genuine beliefs of the religion affiliated with the school, one would have to question why the student would want to be at that school.

Religious schools, and Christian schools in particular, should be able to require all students to practice the religion affiliated with that school as that is the reason that the school exists. Otherwise, why pay for something you want and then not get it.

Parents exercise free will and choice when sending their children to school. If they acknowledge the values and faith of the school as they register the child, they should not then punish a school for practising those same faiths and values, especially when the school has provided all disclosures as to their faith values and practices. This same principle applies to any organisation, sports club, hobby club etc that we select for our children. If in practice it does not feel comfortable, the parent are always free to withdraw their child from the school or entity.

Absolutely, as parents have a choice which school to send their child / children to. If a school clearly states its religious vision and mission statement, then parents have a choice if they wish to send their child to that school or not, knowing the school's stance. If it doesn't align with the parent's religious views then they shouldn't send they need to find another school that does align with their views. Trying to change an existing school's policy to suit prospective students defeats the purpose of the school's vision and mission. If this occurred, then the school could just as well become a secular school.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

It is wrong that schools should be able to force this on children. Following this logic, would it be ok for secular state schools to bar religious children from schools? People must learn to live with people of all religions, not force their religions on others.

Schools are meant to be a place of learning and development of understanding. Allowing children to gain a broader perspective and develop their own worldview - segregating children based on religion assists in perpetuating misunderstanding, instead of opening up a conversation to establish our differences.

I'm not sure what is defined by "injury". As students are themselves individuals, while I believe they ought to be encouraged to practice the beliefs of the religious school they attend, they however ought not to be forced or coerced to behave in a manner contrary to their conscience.

I don't necessarily agree with this statement. I consider religious schools should have the right to choose appropriate staff to support their beliefs but to me that does not translate to students being required to adhere. Students need to find their own level of belief or engagement and are not clones of their parents will or beliefs.

From a Christian perspective, Christianity is about having a relationship with Christ. You can't force someone to do that. Kids should be required to participate in relevant classes and behave in an acceptable manner but forcing them to participate in practices they don't believe in just makes them do something religious for the sake of it. As Jesus showed, religious practice for the sake of looking religious (like the religious leaders of his day) was to be treated with contempt.

I believe schools should be allowed to promote certain values (religious or otherwise). But I don't believe they should force children to follow a certain religion. Across all religions, faith is an individual and unique experience. It is a choice. Forcing certain rituals, routines or rules on children may compromise the free-will behind their faith. Schools should promote open expression of faith, not enforce beliefs.

Students should be free to make their own decisions and be supported with love and grace. You cannot force a religion on a student. However, staff of a religious school should practice the religion affiliated with that school.

For children, schools can model and provide a framework of belief. Religious ceremonies and forms can be utilised, and should be respected by students. But one cannot be made to agree or participate.

- 6. Do you believe religious schools, hospitals, aged care facilities, accommodation providers and disability service providers should be able to preference the hiring of staff of the same religious belief, as long as this is in accordance with a publicly available written policy?**

Yes: 93.28 per cent; No: 6.72 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

The hiring of staff of the same religious belief, as long as this is in accordance with a publicly available written policy, is essential to project the culture, ethos and goals of the institution; just as a political party would hire staff with commitment to its culture ethos and goals.

On many occasions, services given to the public are influenced by religious values. And the public themselves, may wish to be serviced specifically by someone of the same faith, as this allows for closer relationships and understanding. It is therefore fair, that businesses and public services should be able to choose staff of a specific faith or religious affiliation, which suits their business model.

I broadly agree. However, I am concerned that there are risks here in certain health and aged care settings. Inability to recruit staff from a particular faith group should never be allowed to trump safe or critical staffing requirements. For example, an aged care home could reasonably preference employing registered nurses from a particular faith group. But if it finds that it cannot recruit enough, this should never provide it with any excuse or exemption from regulations on safe staffing requirements. It should be closed or penalised under other relevant law and regulations if it then refuses to employ non-adherent staff in such a situation.

Yes. If the business benefits from hiring people with the same beliefs it makes sense. I.e. a church hiring only Christians makes sense as it could actually destroy the church if they didn't have the same belief as the church. Same with all other religions. But I'm a business owner myself. I own a cleaning business that has nothing to do with religion. I would not and I shouldn't be allowed to discriminate against who I hire. As it does not affect the business at all.

For the sake of harmony in the workforce and success in meeting the agreed goal/s. Dissension and conflict will naturally result if people are not of the same mind. Political parties themselves are filled with workers who align themselves to the beliefs of the party. No different for religious schools.

These institutions are the way they are because they have been established as part of a system within the religion that they are affiliated with. For many they are an expression of the requirements of the religion. This is core to the work that they engage in and the way that they go about it. Preferencing people who hold the same religious belief is therefore a key part in ensuring a continued quality of care in line with the core values of the institution. How can religious schools, which parents send their children to in order that they be educated in the faith, teach the religion that they advertise if the teaching

staff do not have a belief in the religion? You cannot require an atheist to teach that there is a God against their conscience, this is why religious schools need their ability to preference staff of the same religion. Similarly, hospitals, aged care providers etc. with religious affiliations need to be able to maintain the values of their religion, otherwise they may as well be in a secular facility. Do not get me wrong on this point though, secular facilities are necessary and do a lot of good for society, however when a facility advertises or is established with certain core values (affiliated with a religion), they need to be able to uphold them in order to lay claim to such values. The most sure way of them being able to maintain this work is to preference those who hold the same religious beliefs to continue delivering care in line with these core values.

An organisation with people that have beliefs contrary to the culture and values of the organisation will not last. For example, a political party exists for particular reasons and beliefs which are publicised. Anyone who joins that party holding beliefs in conflict with the very existence of that party will not be able to make a positive contribution to the organisation and will ultimately experience internal conflict and sooner or later find themselves at odds. The same principle applies to any organisation. An organisation is not necessarily looking for the best person at that role, but the one that fits the organisation well and supports the organisation's mission and vision.

Many such institutions have been established upon the altruistic import of religious beliefs, and, with notable exceptions, their care has been governed by overriding articles of faith. Until recently, these structures were seen as strong controls that undergirded the care for the individual, irrespective of who that might be. To negate what are seen by the institutions as essential components of their care, would be to create internal conflict that would ultimately have a destructive outcome to the integrity of the institution. Anyone considering applying for a position would be fully aware of the job description and the constraints from the institute's policy. Therefore, they would be at liberty to not apply for the position, and not waste their time and others by going through a pointless interview exercise.

Yes, this is the most important part of this bill. Religious schools/providers must be able to hire staff of their own same religious belief and practice, to model and teach the religion to the students. It is similar to a corporation wanting all employees to abide by the corporation's values. I work for a corporation that I know its values and policies, and if I act contrary to them and breach a corporate policy, I know I will be sacked/asked to leave. All that religious schools want with this bill, is the same situation - to be able to positively hire staff of their same religious beliefs - or if a staff member can no

longer ascribe to the school's beliefs, then they can leave and find another school that they can work in. Why should religious schools/providers be any different? As parents, we send our kids to a religious school because the teachers are an extension of the home and model and teach Christian values/teachings to our kids. It's not just a mere academic exercise. Religious schools must be allowed to choose staff based on their religious beliefs, because that is the core condition of employment. This is the core issue that this bill is seeking to protect. Without it, and if exemptions in Discrimination Acts continue to be eroded, the future of religious schools is seriously in doubt.

Religious belief is an ideological worldview and "colours" (or at least should colour) every decision a religious person/institution makes, (i.e., how they see and live in the world). If a school or other organisation is founded and operated according to a religious faith, then they should have the freedom to prefer or even only hire staff of that same religious belief. I can see that it makes good sense that the school or organisation make their policy publicly available so that there is clarity and transparency. However, I can understand how a religiously founded and operated school or organisation may be reticent to state publicly their policy on say the important matter of marriage, sex and gender as it might give opportunity for their opponents to "make trouble" for them, dragging them through the court/tribunal for contravention of the Sex Discrimination Act.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

They should not if they are state funded. In many regional and rural areas there is not much choice of hospital or age care facility. This should not affect and impact in employment of healthcare staff and not be a source of discrimination. Employment should be based on ability not due to beliefs which can be faked.

Because they must, under the current arrangements in Australia, provide services to everyone since everyone is paying them for their services via GST & other taxes. And more people do not practise their religion than do. So should be looked after by non-religious as well as religious people. If they did have such a policy, they would not get enough workers.

They should employ the staff with the best skills. This is particularly so as most are highly subsidised by taxpayers. I want my tax money going to the best doctors and teachers, not the religiously correct.

That effectively excludes well qualified people from a wide range of potential employment opportunities in those places. By the way, a well-qualified doctor, for instance, should be able to work in any medical environment, regardless of any so called preferred religion.

To exempt religious schools, hospitals, aged care facilities, accommodation providers and disability service providers with a policy that excuses it from hiring people of other faiths or no faiths is contrary to good governance. The criteria from hiring should focus on the best qualified, not on religious beliefs.

Should a car dealer be able to preference the hiring of staff to people who own their brand of motor vehicle?

This would create a segregation. People need to relax and understand and learn to live with other non-believers of religion.

We live in a secular society. Religion is a private matter. Employment should be on the basis of skill and experience to ensure the best people are in the right place. Religious people should not have privileged access to employment.

7. Do you consider that religious charities (not covered by question 6) should be able to preference persons who share their religious beliefs when making employment decisions or offering services?

Yes: 91.02 per cent; No: 8.98 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

Charities offer a service within an ethos that needs all staff supporting it. Many charities today are integrated with religions, working internationally within international religious freedoms. Obstructing charities from serving religious individuals in a way that allows the exercising of religious freedoms would limit their freedoms and persecute the vulnerable who access these charities' welfare.

Society has an expectation that there is authenticity. We choose to attend organisations based on the values we desire and would expect their employees to at least adhere to those values, not for profit charities exist for their charitable purpose, so even more so they need to be able to demonstrate to society that their personal hold and implement the organisation's purpose and belief system.

Yes and no. Yes to allowing hiring of people that adhere to their religious beliefs because values will usually align. No to discriminating against offering services if that service was to e.g. Help an atheist with at home care, it shouldn't matter that the receiving person has different beliefs.

People should be free to employ whoever they like in their own organisations, and they should be free to extend their services to whoever they like. In a free society, people should not be forced to do work that they don't want to do - for any reason whatever. There are usually plenty of other service providers around who offer the same or similar services.

Religious charities are really no different to those institutions mentioned in Q6. If those seeking employment have been given a publicly available written policy they will be aware of those beliefs and can decide for themselves whether or not they wish to be employed there. Ultimately, it is up to the employer to decide who they wish to employ as they need to ensure they have the right person performing that job.

Faith is not limited to a particular area of life. If someone is working for a charity, they are representing all the charity stands for and why the charity is motivated to do what they do, in the way they do it. If you believe that everyone is created in the image of God, it influences how you see everyone i.e. everyone is of equal importance. Faith-based charities do what they do because they are motivated by their faith. What they do is an integral part of what they believe.

I think that religious charities should be able to preference likeminded people when making employment decisions, and to some extent when offering services. I would like to think most religious charities will assist others with differing worldviews but they must not be forced to fund/assist a service that is contrary to their belief (i.e. euthanasia/abortions etc for Christian charities).

Yes, because one's religious values impact our ethics, code of conduct and why these charities exist. It goes to the heart of what we think charity is, what good is and why religious people are disproportionately more likely to support charitable work. To insist that people who do not share those values can be employed to carry out the work, risks undermining the confidence of those who give to the charities and may compromise the integrated way in which lives impacted by religious commitments are not defined by single issues.

It makes sense. It avoids confusion and reduces possible tension further down the line if they've not been transparent from the start about their religious affiliation. It's a matter of trust. Being free to talk about organisational goals knowing they are shared. Common goals and purposes are clear from the start, and everyone is on the same page, creates an awareness of expectations and harmony.

The very existence of these charities and the magnificent work they do (which in fact relieves government of needing to do this essential work) hinges on their religious beliefs and the convictions of staff. To water this down and not give these charities the ability to preference persons of the same religious belief will ultimately diminish such charities and (a) hurt the vulnerable people needing these services and (b) shift the burden back to government.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

Provision of care for the disadvantaged is the responsibility of such organisations, and not the promotion or propagation of their personal beliefs. What individuals managing or working for charitable organisations believes has nothing to do with his/her professional work.

I think that religious charities should be available to everyone that is in need in the community. Some communities may only have one charity operating in their town - so its services should be available to everyone. The same goes to staff - most of the charities not mentioned in the previous question are run by volunteers, and a lot of times, there may not be enough available to keep the charity open all of the time, especially in small regional communities, people who have received help come back to serve with the charity that served them.

Charities are service providers. If an organisation's sole purpose is to inculcate into a particular faith, it is a church, not a charity. Therefore, charities provide services, the nature of which is not religious in nature. Therefore, the belief or non-belief of an employee should not affect the provision of that service. Again, service providers in regional or remote areas may be the only available option, to allow them to discriminate on religious grounds may cause inconvenience, hardship or emotional or financial hurt to the public. Unacceptable.

It would be appalling if a charitable organisation - which, presumably, if a registered NFP, would benefit from the tax advantages/exemptions that come with the designation - were able to legally deny (the practical effect of 'preferencing' some over others on an ideological basis) services to people in

need because of the latter's religious beliefs/lack of belief. If this were to be allowed, the legislation designating as charities organisations engaging in this practice should be amended so that they are no longer defined as such.

Religion is a personal choice. As such religion has no rightful place in the shared community sphere. Charities, whether religious affiliated or not, enjoy tax concessions in exchange for providing community support. It is despicable to suggest a charity supported by the Australian people could ever act to deny services or support to anyone based on religious affiliation.

My experience as a volunteer in a Catholic charity is that we don't know the faiths of the people we serve and our volunteers and paid workers are from a broad range of backgrounds. The question of the workers' beliefs doesn't seem to come up and seems irrelevant. We are not teaching any doctrine, just serving.

My position is mid-way: on balance, the private religious views of the staff should not be allowed to preclude the offering of services that contribute to the well-being of any people or the planet and its other creatures, provided that all staff, if asked before employment, should agree to respect the prevailing religious ethos of fellow-workers and relevant clients.

Yes and no. Definitely yes to employment decisions.... I'm less sure about the offering services part. If it's a charitable organisation, then I think they probably need to offer that charity to anyone who fits with their mission. I don't think Meals on Wheels should be able to refuse to feed Hindus or Christians. And I don't think a women's shelter should be able to refuse service to Muslim or Buddhist women. On the other hand, if the organisation's publicly stated mission is to serve Jewish widows (for example), then why should they be forced to use funds they've raised for that purpose to serve Sikh widows (or vice versa)? That's a tricky issue.

8. Do you believe religious people would be comfortable to share their beliefs in public life without the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021?

Yes: 31.59 per cent; No: 68.41 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

Religious people are not all the same. Some are open to talk and share. Others are silent. I do not know what exactly the religious Discrimination Bill is meant to help. I do not speak any differently to friends of religion or no religion. Who gains by the Bill?

I believe people are very open talking about their religion in comparison to a few years ago. I think that if the bill is passed it will create more freedom but not much difference than what there is now.

This already happens because we have Freedom of Speech in this nation. This Bill will not stop people sharing their beliefs (religious or not) but may prevent people from being discriminated against when they do.

It does not stop or prevent anyone stating their personal beliefs at the moment. What it would do is allow individuals protections to prevent others in stating theirs in return. I believe that this legislation is seeking to bestow a privilege to one section of society over another.

The entire gospel is about the good news of salvation through faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ. Sharing the love God has for others only comes naturally. This Bill will not stop the work of Christ and the gospel will continue to spread here in Australia and around the globe.

Most religious beliefs are fairly widely accepted by society. Only a small number of religious beliefs that are socially seen as unacceptable (such as refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of same-sex relationships) would cause problems if expressed.

Religious people have always shared their beliefs for thousands of years regardless of whether there has been protection for religious beliefs or not. Quite often religious people have shared their beliefs during the most severe government opposition, or even when the State controlled Religion. Think of the centuries during the Medieval period when people like John Wycliffe, Jan Huss, Martin Luther and many others spoke out against what they believed was wrong or corrupt in the State run Church. Many of these were killed for sharing their beliefs. Then also think of religious people living in Communist or oppressive totalitarian countries who shared their beliefs at the risk of their lives. History shows us that despite the attempts of these totalitarian regimes to wipe out religion, they were unsuccessful. Faith (religious belief) cannot be stopped. Nor can it be legislated.

I say yes because it's what we are called to do as faithful Christians no matter what the circumstances. But to be outlawed from sharing our faith would be wrong. Without a religious discrimination Bill I think that sharing one's faith eventually become unlawful without the Bill.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

The current cultural climate, particularly as promoted on the majority of mainstream media, tends to the far left and anti-religious to the point that employees and athletes might reasonably fear for their continued livelihood if they express their beliefs openly. This current left leaning cultural situation is essentially un-Australian in that it moves away from everyone being given a fair go, even as regards to their beliefs. Thus, legal protection of such basic rights is now required.

Religious views are being marginalised, ridiculed, and effectively silenced within much of society today. It has become a case of identity politics, where who you identify as is more important than what you're saying. My research, perspectives and beliefs have been immediately discredited when an audience knows of my faith. It becomes not only a reason to stop listening, but to mock and belittle me. This has occurred across social and academic settings, and it's both demoralising and hurtful.

At the moment, I am becoming more and more fearful of stating my faith in public. I know at various organisations/institutions it is best if I do not say anything for fear of being misunderstood and labelled as "old-fashioned", "a religious nut" and "intolerant".

Unfortunately, the state of our society and media currently doesn't allow this to happen. Other communities and people groups can have a loud voice in public life, yet sadly, Christians are attacked if they dare say something that is considered contrary to the loud voices in society. Note - the loud voices are not necessarily what majority of the population thinks/agrees with.

Some people are always willing to express they views no matter what the cost. Such people are very valuable members of the community. However, while there is no suggestion that this new legislation will radically alter things, I do believe it will help many more find more a voice. There will be new responsibilities for people in this, to express themselves persuasively and compassionately, and to also allow themselves to be accountable in putting their case forward.

Unfortunately, there have already been cases where people have been discriminated against for beliefs they hold and expressed. They have unnecessarily suffered emotional and mental stress, loss of employment, financial costs etc just for stating their personal religious beliefs. This is sad. It should not be so in a democracy like Australia. It is actually a basic human

right to have, practise and express one's beliefs. That includes even people with no religious beliefs.

Religious views are being increasingly marginalised in our culture. Allowing people to be discriminated against based on their beliefs is unacceptable for a modern country, as it gives an imbalanced amount of power to those with a different ideology.

It's already not ok to say Merry Christmas we are now saying it's "happy holidays". It's completely silly because Christmas is about the birth of Christ- mythical or not- and yet non-religious people enjoy this holiday. It would be akin to saying I don't believe in the calendar year so saying happy new year is an affront to my beliefs- but I'll take the holiday thanks.

I believe religious people are already feeling under siege and very wary of discussing their beliefs, even with friends. One only has to look at media and social media comments to see how much vitriol can be aimed at people of any faith, but particularly the Christian faith. As evidenced by the appalling comments aimed at ABC's Richard Glover (not a Christian himself) when he dared to broadcast a 7 minute interview with an academic about the real meaning of Christmas, two weeks before the Christmas holiday which everyone is happy to take advantage of!

As society has moved away from Christian principles, many Christians, without the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021, would not be comfortable sharing their beliefs in public, because of the threat of legal action, losing their job or not being promoted. Many valuable employees could be lost and our nation's prosperity, suffer.

- 9. Do you think it should be lawful for a person to be able to make a statement of belief so long as it is made in good faith and is not malicious, threatening, intimidating, or harassing and does not vilify a person or group or advocate the commission of a serious offence?**

Yes: 97.45 per cent; No: 2.55 per cent

Sample of comments of submitters who answered yes:

Absolutely because I believe in the freedom of speech. Without it we cannot hear other perspectives, learn from different world-views, work together in a melting pot that is Australia. Everyone can tell the difference between someone who is sharing something that might be taking offensively and

someone who is being a belligerent, rude, mean, nasty jerk. It's all about the manner of speech and attitude of the person speaking.

Yes, otherwise how are we to live in a multicultural society? Everyone has a set of beliefs by which they live, even if they don't call it their religion, it is what they live by and follow. It's only fair if we can all speak openly about our beliefs and be ok to talk and disagree.

However, definitions of harassment, vilification etc need to be objective not subjective. At present anyone can be offended by anything. A difference of opinion is not harassment or vilification. We don't act that way in politics. Both sides can criticise the other. So why prevent dialogue and debate on religious or philosophical grounds? If a philosophy is so fragile that it cannot handle debate it needs to rethink its foundations.

But I worry about who gets to judge the end of that question. Who gets to judge whether a statement of faith is not malicious, threatening, intimidating, or harassing and does not vilify a person or group or advocate the commission of a serious offence? It seems that some groups, are especially good at saying they are hurt by simple statements.

People should be able to say what they want to say. Hurting someone's feelings is not a good enough reason to cancel free speech in Australia. The moment the government starts controlling what people can and can't say, we become a country who must obey what the government says, rather than their God that they believe in. It's not the government's role to play God in people's lives and dictate how they can carry out their beliefs. The government exists to serve the people, not the other way around.

At the end of the day, it's about respect and you wouldn't go and talk to somebody about your beliefs unless you want to help them as they may be going through a hard time and for them having faith in our God above has helped me get through a lot of bad times. Sharing with somebody else could help them move in a positive way to get through the hard times a day going through as I said at the start it's all about respect and if they don't except that that's fine and it's on my part it's about respecting what they believe is well.

Is it in any way reasonable that it should not be? This question goes directly to the core of having an opinion at all. Nobody has a moral or ethical structure that could be explained or acted upon in nobody was permitted to refer to their belief system. A person could never explain why they did something, or

liked something, or why they helped someone or thought something. Denying an individual the right to say they believe something - especially in the above conditions - is a great crime far worse than potentially offending someone. There are people in the world who will take mortal offense at anything said by anyone. Those people cannot be the bar by which we measure a person's right to expression. Provided the above is true, how can a reasonable person refuse the expression - especially when to explain their refusal itself would be in contravention to the rule.

This is describing a Democracy. People should be free to express their opinions on many issues and if another disagrees, they are also able to express their views in a courteous manner. It is called 'debate' and is one of the basic foundations that democracies are built on.

Accusations will always be there. With this protection in place and the public made aware of what constitutes a statement of belief that is not made in good faith, then should one feel those negative emotions, one can always have crucial conversations, asking for clarification so that there is no misunderstanding of intent. It will also prevent one from taking the law into one's own hands and executing punishment. Court time and other unnecessary expenses and consequences can be avoided if such situations can be dealt with peaceably.

Being able to do this is good and healthy for society and relationships in general. I do not think a society is better off without this. Indeed, this would only be allowing the "beliefs" of the majority to be able to be voiced.

Sample of comments of submitters who answered no:

It implies that such freedom of speech is restricted to religious speech. Freedom of speech should not be constrained to religious speech.

Quite the opposite. A belief cannot be protected by law and should not because it is not a "real thing". What a persons says and what they actually believe cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt. Beliefs change with time and evidence. If you don't want malice, threats, intimidation, or harassment, then people should keep their beliefs to themselves unless they are causing them a conflict of interest.

Ignorance and doctrine thinking can appear not threatening to the speaker but may cause harm and may shift cultural views towards greater discrimination and non-acceptance.

This discriminates the person to be silenced and not have free speech that every other minority group has.

A person should be able to make a statement of belief no matter what. All of the extra qualifications are unnecessary and open to all kinds of interpretations. Freedom of speech is very important. The government cannot, and should not try to, legislate against things being said which may cause offense. A person should have the right to say that they disagree with something or think a particular thing is wrong. Otherwise, the values of one group will be placed higher than those of another and open, constructive debate and interrogation of ideas will be impossible.

The definition of "good faith" is not defined clearly enough. For example, a teacher could tell their students that they believe gay people are sinful and will go to hell unless they change their ways, and claim that the statement was in "good faith" because they were trying to protect the students' souls.

The threshold is too high for malicious, threatening, intimidating, harassing or vilifying behaviour. Micro-aggression from such religious statements of belief are psychologically damaging in the longrun. I have endured micro-aggressive racism for a long time. I wouldn't want to endure micro-aggressive religious statements and behaviour on top of that.

Statements that are not malicious, intimidating or harassing nor vilifying do not require special protections. They enjoy the same protections as all other innocent statements, and do not require an 'exceptional' status because they come from a belief or faith.