

21 December 2021

Opening Statement

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights regarding Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and related bills

- Catholic schools should be free to be Catholic
- Religious freedom deserves the same protection as other rights in Australia, ensuring a fair and reasonable balance with other protected rights
- This bill is about protecting religious rights, not discriminating against people who don't support the same religious views
- Parents should have the right to choose a school for their children that reflects their values and beliefs
- Catholic schools don't, and are not seeking to, discriminate against people on the basis of their personal attributes
- Governments should protect the rights of Australians to associate on common religious beliefs
- Australia needs harmonisation of legislation for religious freedom to prevent over-reach of state legislation on faith-based schools
- 63% of the general population, 82% of Catholics and 79% of parents with children in Catholic schools believe "Religious schools are entitled to require employees to act in their roles that uphold the ethos and values of that faith and the school should be free to favour hiring employees who share these values" *

** Finding from a large community issues survey on a range of issues from school funding to religious freedom undertaken by a respected national pollster, John Utting Research (November 2021).*