

Dear Members of the **Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs**.

As requested by the Hon. Senator Paul Scarr, member of the Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in today's hearing at 10:45am, please find below an example the Senator asked to know about where religious beliefs were protected by the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1998.

The example is actually my own experience where my religious belief was protected by the ADA 1998. It did happen several years ago but it is a relevant example.

In my work as an Organizer for the Independent Education Union's Hobart Office, I visit non government schools including catholic schools. Having heard that there was a new Salesian priest allocated to be the pastor for Dominic College I decided to introduce myself to him when I next went to visit the college, as the priest's residence was in the school grounds.

I went to the school and saw that the door of the priests' residence was slightly opened and so I knocked on the door and after no one came to the door I decided to just put a welcome note in one of my business cards asking to see the priest when ever convenient. I left the card on a table near the door.

Soon after I received an abrupt and threatening email from Dominic School management indicating that I was not to go to the priests residence nor approach him at all or there would be legal consequences. I responded explaining that this matter was a very important and pastoral matter for me because the Salesian priests in Italy were very kind to me when I lived in Italy, having often done after school care for those kids who were of a poor background. So the pastoral care that I received in Italy by the Salesians, and the respect and spiritual guidance I wanted to honor, was being disrespected by a misunderstanding that was out of control.

I appealed to Dominic college management to reconsider their stance as it went to the core of my religious and spiritual belief especially as it reflected on the Salesian order. I had shared my deep sense of spiritual respect to the former Salesian priest allocated to Dominic College and who was a close friend to my father, and I was keen to speak to the new current Salesian priest to continue this spiritual matter.

Dominic management refused to recognize my spiritual needs and religious link to the Salesians and so they continued their threatening stance. This was not appropriate as it was unfair to not allow me to speak to a priest on any matter just because I worked in a union.

I was still threatened with legal action for wanting to express my religious needs and belief and so I had no option but to seek remedy via putting a claim under the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (ADA 1998).

Ultimately the claim was accepted and was conciliated and resolved positively via an apology being provided to me via Dominic College management. Dominic college management realized in the conciliation session, where I explained my deep religious and spiritual connection with the Salesian order, that I was only trying to show respect for my spiritual need to reach out to the new Salesian priest.

This is an example where my belief beliefs were protected by the Tasmanian ADA 1998.

My ability to seek remedy under the ADA 1998 would have been curtailed if the changes proposed had been in place then.

I am happy to provide more details if needed.

Dino Ottavi
Tasmanian Community Member

I acknowledge the Palawa people as the traditional and ongoing custodians of lutruwita (Tasmania). I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Sent from my iPhone