

Opening statement

Joint Committee on Human Rights re the Religious Discrimination Bill

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

My name is Peter Comensoli, and I'm the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. I represent the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as the bishop responsible for public engagement and I appreciate the opportunity to give evidence.

The Conference supports the Religious Discrimination Bill.

The Bill is a key missing piece in Australia's discrimination law that would provide parity by placing the right to freedom of religion on par with other rights in Australian law.

For Catholics, as for many other religious traditions, our faith goes beyond our private worship and is expressed in public through our charitable services, including our provision of faith-based education.

Parents and carers choose our schools for their children because they value what we have to offer, which is a mission of faith-based education that reasonably and respectfully teaches Catholic beliefs and values.

This legislation is a reasonable and fair addition to the existing discrimination laws that protects freedom from religious discrimination in the same way other foundational human rights are protected in Australia.