



MEDIA RELEASE

26 June 2024 – For Immediate Release

A “positive right” for Christian Schools

More than 2,200 signed postcards were delivered to the Prime Minister in conjunction with the launch of a new campaign for a “positive right” for Christian schools and other religious educational institutions.

This comes off the back of the ‘Faith In Our Future’ town halls organised in response to the controversial recommendations released by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC). The postcards, each bearing a signature and a message reminding the Prime Minister of his commitment that religious freedom protections “will not go backwards” will be delivered to the Prime Minister on Wednesday morning

The sold-out town hall events in Brisbane, Sydney, Launceston, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide have united supporters of Christian schools across Australia to share their experiences of the value of faith and communicate their concerns to Federal political representatives. A clear message coming from the faith community that Christian schools must have a “positive right” to continue to operate in accordance with their beliefs.

Even Justice Rothman, who led the ALRC review, recognised that something significant was missing. He has since said that schools need a “positive right” to operate schools based on their ethos as outlined above.

Polling shows how important parental choice is to voters across the political spectrum, and how much support there is for our ability to employ staff who share our beliefs.

Research shows that parents are wanting the values and beliefs provided Christian schools, and that faith-based education makes a positive difference to the Australian community by providing a sense of meaning, purpose and hope to the next generation.

Religious leaders have worked hard to prepare detailed legislative proposals for the Albanese Government that capture this “positive right” in a way that is consistent with international law and protects communities of faith.

It is time for the Government to deliver on its election commitment to allow religious educational institutions to continue operating as genuine communities of faith.

ENDS



Comments attributed to Vanessa Cheng, Executive Officer, Australian Association of Christian Schools –

“For Christian schools, faith is whole of life, 24 hour experience, not something that is segregated into particular subjects, areas, or times of the day. It is just common sense that Christian schools want to employ people who have a genuine faith and not be forced to employ people who don’t share the same beliefs.”

“Religious educational institutions don’t want to live with the constant threat of litigation from activists who want to undermine faith in our society - Christian schools want to focus on providing quality education.”

Comments attributed to Erik Hofsink, Executive Director, Associated Christian Schools –

“Now is the time, an historic opportunity for this issue to be settled once and for all. The Government must respect and protect the religious diversity of educational institutions in this country.”

Comments attributed to Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy, Christian Schools Australia –

“It is astounding that only a few weeks after the ALRC report was tabled in Parliament, Justice Rothman, who led the ALRC Inquiry, acknowledged that something significant was missing in the report because the recommendations by the ALRC give our schools no “positive right” to hire people of faith. He wanted to put this in place, as did the former ALRC President, Justice Derrington, but was hamstrung by the narrow terms of reference.”

“Religious leaders are calling for a positive right for all religious educational institutions to operate according to their faith, to be able to employ staff who share that faith, and to be able to teach their students in a manner consistent with that faith.”

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About the Associations:

Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) represents over a hundred independent Christian schools in every state and territory across Australia, ranging from very small to large; urban to regional, rural and remote. The majority of member schools are non-denominational with a protestant heritage and are governed by parent associations with over 44,000 students enrolled from a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Associated Christian Schools (ACS) represents over 45 independent Christian Schools throughout Queensland. With over 30,000 students attending member schools, this represents approximately 20% of the independent school students in Queensland. Whilst each of our member schools are independently governed, they choose to collaborate together through ACS, for the purpose of delivering high quality Christian education for the common good.

Christian Schools Australia (CSA) is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating over 86,000 students and employing more than 13,500 staff at more than 200 locations across Australia. CSA member schools provide caring and compassionate education within an authentic Christian learning community.