

Act Now to Protect Religious Freedoms

Chris Callus the WA President & National President of the Australian Association for Religious Education, calls on members and contacts of our association to inform themselves of the situation facing Religious Freedoms in Australia as it will directly impact on schools and other education environments. Website www.aare.org.au

Urgent action to protect Religious Freedoms in Australia - AARE

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We need to **act now to protect Religious Freedoms in Australia!!**

Years ago it would not have been raised as an issue but with very well-orchestrated and resourced attacks increasing on religious freedoms being made today, it is now essential. I fear that in the future, those in power promising that we are safe will not be here and then there will be no protections offered if they are not enshrined in law.

It is not prudent to be complacent, thinking that religious schools, organisations, churches and religious communities are safe. It is already happening.

Remember this one.

... a state government commissioner ruled that the (Australia's) Catholic bishops may have broken the law in distributing their booklet "Don't Mess with Marriage" ... The Bishops' booklet was distributed nationwide but in Tasmania, the Archbishop of Hobart, Julian Porteous, sent it home in a sealed envelope to parents of children enrolled in Catholic schools. It is an inoffensive booklet, written in the style of a pastoral letter and very respectful of same-sex attracted people. It was written for Catholics, explaining the Catholic position on marriage. A complaint that it was offensive was lodged and it was ruled that not just Archbishop Porteous, but the entire Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, has a case to answer. The matter went to court.

If you have not heard about or received an invitation to make a submission then here it is.

The Australian Association for Religious Education is making a submission.

Beyond our control, the **deadline for submissions is NEXT WEEK, January 31, 2018** ... so you will need to act on this urgently.

Please read Senator The Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells' speech by clicking on "here" on the 4th line of her email below.

Submissions don't have to be long, just read the info below and addressing one key point is enough - or more if you feel inspired (must be under 2 MB). Quality submissions are crucial but I suggest so is the volume, so if you are unable to pen a substantial submission at least send a short one.

Religious Freedom Review.

<https://pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/religious-freedom-review>

Click on "online submission" below & submit there or send by post or email (details provided there too).

Part of the Senator's email to her supported is here:

Thank you for your email regarding the same-sex legislation and the lack of protection for religious freedoms.

As you may be aware, I was one of only 12 Senators who had the courage of their convictions and voted no. In fact, I was the only Liberal Minister in the Turnbull Government to vote no!

A copy of my speech on the Same Sex Marriage Bill may be found [here](#).

In the House of Representatives, only 4 of the 150 members voted against the Smith bill.

The rest either voted yes or chose to abstain.

Of the 48% of eligible Australian voters who supported SSM, many did so in the belief that religious freedoms would be protected.

Regrettably, even the most basic religious protection amendments were defeated. They included:

- *Religious and conscientious protections for celebrants;*
- *Freedom of expression and recognition of legitimate beliefs;*
- *Protections for charities;*
- *Non-discrimination in Government funding;*
- *Protection of religious bodies and schools; and*
- *Parents to have the right to withdraw children from certain classes.*

*I was proud to stand up for you in the Senate and will continue to do so.
But I now need your help.*

Last month, Prime Minister Turnbull announced the creation of a Review to be led by Philip Ruddock. It will consider 'the intersections between the enjoyment of the freedom of religion and other human rights'.

*This could be our last chance to have even the most basic of religious freedoms recognised in the law.
I ask you to make a written submission.*

*Unfortunately, submissions can only be made online by using the **online submission form**.*

*Efforts are being made to have the submission date pushed back, but at present, **all submissions must be received by 31 January 2018.***

Together, I know we can succeed and ensure that the valid concerns of so many Australians are heard and that religious freedoms are again protected.

*My warmest regards,
Concetta*

Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells
Minister for International Development and the Pacific
Liberal Senator for New South Wales

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