

## RESPONSE TO:

# Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Laws: Consultation Paper

It is quite discriminatory to attempt to force the schools of a faith-based community to ignore the beliefs of a prospective staff-member.

Students in *Kindergarten/ Reception* through to *Year 12* are very reliant on their teachers as well as their parents in forming their own beliefs and values. Of course, from senior-primary and throughout high-school, they begin to make their own judgments in line with the contrasting beliefs presented by their peer-group and by the media in its various domains.

Teachers who do not support the values and beliefs implicit in the curriculum of a School very quickly reveal by their words and behaviour their own dismissive stance. When parents have chosen a specific School on the basis that its Mission will align with their own beliefs, it is unethical for key decision-makers in the State to override the parental rights.

Where a State is a dictatorship or proclaims a particular ideology, then such vanquishing of parents or their faith-community is logical.

However, in pluralistic Australia, where all the major faiths of the world are represented, together with a large group who do not believe in the existence of any power beyond the here and now world, the State has a particular duty to respect the variety of belief-systems.

Of course, the State, through its legal and educational agencies, must endeavour to ensure that hatreds towards others and ancient enmities from other settings around the world are not nurtured in our Australian Schools.

Australia has no future composed of series of antagonistic ghettos warring with each other. However, the State has no role in subverting the faith-communities that demonstrate their respect for other Australians who do not share their beliefs.