

I am writing this submission so I can have a say in the protection of my community, the protection of Australian religion, and the protection of the rights of religious Australians.

I am Catholic. My family is also Catholic. My best friend and her family are Muslim. I go to a state high school. In it, I know many other Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses. I can tell you myself, and I can tell you on the behalf of all the religious people around me, that none of us support this 'anti-discrimination' law. It is not because any of us despise LGBT people. We do not. It is because we want to protect ourselves, our religious communities, and the futures of religious Australian children.

I used to go to a Catholic school. No one there had any relation to having a diverse gender identity, nor did they have any relation to drugs, alcohol, crime, or other subjects against the religion we were all part of, or at least knew of. I felt safe there, our parents felt safe with us being there, and I know my classmates felt safe as well. Then, everyone went to high school. I was in a country town, where the only high school was a government-owned state school. To keep me from going to such a place, my parents put me in an online school. For others in my school, that was not the case. Once we transitioned to non-religious schools, our safety fell apart – most people go, and my classmates may have already gone, to drugs, crime, having intercourse at 14 years old, and questioning their gender identities. In my online environment, I and every other person in my year level are consistently exposed to homosexual students being able to freely voice their beliefs, and there being no faith community whatsoever. This is fine, as this is the purpose of a state school. It is a place where everyone comes from diverse backgrounds and beliefs, protected from discrimination - so much so that the teachers do not lift a finger when three boys talk of how they are in love with each other, in front of a class which the teacher is aware has multiple Christian and Muslim students - but at the same time is restrictive of religion. A religious institution is different. Its purpose is for people of the same group and of similar beliefs to learn in an environment where everyone is completely free to share their similar opinions and are protected from subjects that clash with those beliefs. A state school is designed to be secular. In a religious, such as a Catholic school, it is not so.

Why not keep it like this? This reform's purpose is to secularise religious institutions, and to make them more like state schools. This defeats the purpose of a religious institution then, doesn't it?

It is important that religious institutions are allowed to stay the way they are, even if that means denying homosexual students from being enrolled, because students enrolled in these institutions are there for their safety. Why is a Catholic individual enrolled in a Catholic school? Because their parent wants them to learn about their faith, and to be taught in an environment where they can be confident their student will be safe, both physically and from being exposed to subjects against their religion. Why is a Muslim individual enrolled in an Islamic school? For the same reason. And perhaps the greatest characteristic of religious institutions is to allow students and staff to share the same beliefs and feel comfortable in doing so.

What happens when you taint this and force people who don't share the same opinions to join these schools or universities, and work together? The students are no longer safe, and the religious school is no longer allowed to stand for what it is.

Imagine this scenario. You are a Catholic. You enrol your child in a Catholic school. Your child is then protected most of their school life. Of course, they have faint understandings of drugs, of violence, of sex and sexualisation, and of sexual identity, but the idea of joining a mate to inject themselves with heroin, the idea of stealing a car, the idea of having intercourse at 14 years of age, the idea of becoming a boy instead of a girl or vice versa, never crossed their mind. Now comes this reform. The

school must accept any individual who comes to enrol, regardless of whether or not that student identifies as being transgender, or whether they have a baby and they're only 14 years old, or whether they have an adult boyfriend they speak of to their friends. The students or their parents have no say. Why? Because it's discriminatory to deny someone enrolment based on that institution's religion. It's discriminatory to deny someone enrolment, even if you, and every person in your school is a true Catholic, and you simply cannot become acquainted with a homosexual person because of the religion of your institution, the religious beliefs of which have existed for thousands of years. Whether you are a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, your beliefs don't matter – all that matters is that every homosexual person, regardless of the fact there may be a state school available nearby, is granted access to a school where they are completely the odd one out, bound to be discriminated against more than they possibly could if they were denied enrolment. Nothing matters except for them – because it's discriminatory. So, now there's a homosexual person in your child's school. Your child becomes acquainted with them. They are taught how to kiss people of the same sex. They are taught that it is good to be LGBT, that it is trendy, that it is a group you can feel you belong in. They are asked if they feel comfortable in their current sexual orientation. What do you do? Your family and your child are good Catholics, and now, your child is straying from that because they've been exposed to the concept of changing one's gender. What can you do? Put them in a state school and the issue will be worse. Put them in a different religious institution and the law stays. Perhaps you can't teach them at home. You are denied the right to protect your child. It is a human right, the right of a parent, as strong an entitlement as any homosexual person wishing to be enrolled in a Catholic school, to choose what your child knows as good and bad. How your child sticks to their religion. How your child's future shapes out. It is the right of a parent. And this law wipes that away, leaving you with no choice but to leave your child in the arms of something you wanted to protect them from.

Now, let's give another example. A 15-year-old girl with a baby goes to your child's Islamic school. She isn't denied enrolment – after all, that would be discriminatory. You, as a Muslim, prioritise your daughter's purity and connection to her religion, as any other religious person would. Your child is acquainted with this individual. This individual talks to your daughter about her experiences in sexualising herself – and how she came to have her child in the first place – and your daughter becomes desensitized to the concept of immorality, which you put her in the Islamic school to protect her from. What do you do? Again, you can't put her in a state school, and perhaps you can't teach her yourself. The right to choose what to protect your child from has been taken away from you. The right for your child to learn in an environment where they are with similar traditional religious people has been taken away from them.

Or you might be a parent with a young child in year 1, who is at a religious school. A new teacher comes in, who identifies as being an LGBT man. No one has any say in it, because denying the employment of a homosexual staff member is discriminatory. There have been multiple cases of grooming among homosexual men and children, and if you deny this or if it would never cross your mind as a concern, you're lying to yourself. It is a concern for your child's safety. And any parent has the right to keep their children safe, regardless of whether or not that teacher could really be involved in paedophilia. It is still a concern every parent has the right to have, but this law removes every parent's right to protect their children – whether that is physical protection, or protection from the 'preaching' that could go on during lessons.

Denying a student or staff member enrolment or employment is not discriminatory, because it is based on religious beliefs. There are many examples where 'discrimination' on the same level is accepted. A Ukrainian sportsperson refusing to engage with a Russian sportsperson. That is

completely reasonable, because the Ukrainian has every right to stay away from that Russian because of their political and sentimental beliefs. No one forces them to engage because its 'discriminatory'. This specific scenario of people boycotting Russian people is repeated in many other ways – a British orchestra refusing to play Russian works, Russians being denied the opportunity to represent their country in the Australian Open. This, most people can agree, is fair – people, due to their backgrounds and beliefs, rightfully have grudges against people of this nation. And it is not called discriminatory; people respect that belief. Take the example of people with tattoos or other body art being denied access to some public spaces in some countries. Countries like South Korea, Japan, Turkey, the UAE, all force people to conceal their ink. Society barely takes another look at that. People understand that many cultures, for religious or personal reasons, are very uncomfortable with tattoos, and have the right to be. And yet that, for the most part, isn't labelled as discriminatory. A well-known and very suitable example, is concealing your body when in the presence of some religious people. If you are near a mosque, or in the house of a Muslim person, you will most likely have the respect and common sense to not be excessively showy, or maybe you'll even wear a head covering. In Western society, in Australia perhaps the most, that is understood and accepted. Muslim people, and people of other minority religions, really make up a large part of our society and are what make it so diverse. If you force those people in Islamic schools and other educational institutions to spend a large part of their time alongside people they simply cannot tolerate and agree with, you are completely scrapping that idea of respect you had previously. Are you really so ignorant that you say you respect Muslim people, and therefore will always include them and will always respect their culture, and yet you don't understand how they can't tolerate LGBT people? 70% of Australia is made up of religious people, and more of them are like-minded people who have the same beliefs on what it is to be a good person than you think. If you don't realise this, so much so that you will force religious people to work alongside LGBT people, in the institutions they have felt safe in for so long, then who are you to have a say in this country? Who are you to request this reform?

I can say for myself and my religious community, and the other religious communities in Australia, that we in no way hate people with sexual orientations other than being heterosexual, or people who are denied enrolment or employment due to their relationship or pregnancy situation. I can guarantee you that every parent who opposes having their child alongside an LGBT person, every principal who denies the enrolment of an LGBT child, does not have anything against that person. That's what it is to be religious. You simply cannot accept, and don't accept what the person does or what their situation is, but as people, you tolerate them because they are real people like all of us, with real rights too.

But religious people also have rights. Religion is a collapsing concept today. Religious institutions or businesses that somehow relate to religion are the only places where we feel like we can practice our religion and believe what we believe in peace and harmony. We've been forced to change our political and moral opinions, because in a society like today, as secular as it is, everyone is forced to accept and support laws like euthanasia, abortion, same-sex marriage, or being silenced to talk about your religious beliefs. In public, Australia is slowly becoming a place where that 30% of non-religious people have more control and a say than us and are forcing those 70% of Australians to be quiet, or to give away religion altogether. Religious institutions are the only places where we can voice our beliefs and practice them without being shut down. Do you realise what forcing religious Australians to be educated with people they don't agree with will do? It will secularise religious institutions even more. Perhaps you realise this, perhaps that's your intention, but let it be made clear – I used to go to a Catholic school which I felt safe in but knew wasn't the religious place it was supposed to be. Many of the teachers were atheists or along those lines, as were many of the

children. The only thing keeping it a Catholic school was that we learnt about the faintest aspects of Catholicism, and the students had a good enough idea of being good people that no one beat each other up. That, along with other Christian schools, is already getting worse – whether its forcing students to learn about non-Christian concepts, allowing students to engage in and teach non-Christian activities, or whether it's the literal sexualisation of children. This is not at the extremes yet – and there are good and bad religious schools – however, they will only become more secular. And how will they become secular? By forcing students to believe in and integrate with people and ideas against their religion. First, students will be forced to learn alongside LGBT students. Then, LGBT concepts, if they aren't already being taught (which they are in many cases), will be preached to students. This will be the case for every non-Christian or non-religious concept there is, and eventually religious schools will be the exact same as state schools. Do you want to do that? Abolish religious schools? You can do that, but don't expect all the religious people in Australia to be happy and satisfied, knowing that every aspect of their lives is being secularised by a society which so-called 'supports everyone' and 'embraces religion and culture'.

Of course, the same can be said when LGBT people aren't allowed in religious institutions. That we are a society which so-called 'supports everyone'. But who are you supporting in bringing in this law? Are you supporting the countless religious people in Australia who don't support it, or are you supporting the few LGBT people that are so desperate to get into religious schools? What, and who, are your priorities? LGBT people have the right to choose where they get educated, but so do people of religion. By forcing such a thing on religious people, you're pushing them out, more than you're pushing out gender diverse people. Parents will virtually want to pull their students out of schools, because they don't feel their children are safe anymore. Is that better or worse than turning down the enrolment of an LGBT person? Is it better or worse, considering there are far more parents who will take out their children than there are LGBT people trying to get enrolled? You must think about the issue and what effects 'solving' this issue will have on other people. What is the issue? Some LGBT people, who have the option to go to a state school, are denied enrolment at a religious institution due to the religious beliefs that that institution is entitled to. What is the effect of solving the issue? LGBT people are allowed to be educated where they want, but religious people are forced, without a say, to have these people schooled alongside them. They end up leaving the institution because they no longer feel safe. Think about the amount of LGBT people in that scenario, and think about how they are emotionally affected. Then think about the amount of religious people in that scenario, and think about how THEY are emotionally affected.

On the topic of what the issue is, there are other points too – why is it better for an LGBT person to be at a religious institution than at a non-religious institution? They may call themselves religious – despite doing things against that religion, particularly if they are Christian, Muslim or Jewish – and so access to a religious school gives them religious education. But is it truly better? Nearly everyone in religious schools, with the current laws, will not be homosexual and some may be homophobic. If an LGBT person is amongst all these people who are like opposites to them, do you not think they'll be bullied? Members of the LGBT community being bullied is something that still happens among children – older cases are in some ways rarer due to the grants which homosexual people receive in society and in the workplace – and so by bringing this reform you are ultimately fuelling an issue you said existed in the first place. What is the point of that? In a state school, it is far more diverse and accepting, and there are multiple awareness days for LGBT students and staff. It is a place where they will really be safer. And keep in mind that around 70% of Australian schools are state schools, so more often than not there will be a state school available.

Then there are the effects of how this law would fuel the flames between non-LGBT accepting religious people and LGBT people. If parents are constantly concerned about their child being in school due to this law, they are only going to blame it on the LGBT community. Not in an extreme sense, because they wouldn't be proper religious people then, but still, the point holds – religious people will hold a grudge against the people who ultimately got treated better than them, and who ultimately make them concerned for their child's safety.

Obviously, it is a subjective matter. Regardless of the decision, people will be hurt, as is the case with any law change. But what is objective is that the impact on religious people will be greater. Religious Australians will be the ones feeling they've been hung out to dry over some children who wanted to be enrolled in a religious institution. Religious Australian parents will be the ones who are majorly concerned for their child's safety – and not in a petty sense, on a major scale, where they are concerned for their child's sense of morality, their child's connection to religion, even their child's physical safety. Religious Australian parents will be the ones who will have their rights to protect their children stripped from them. Religious Australians will be the ones who will never forget that their country doesn't even care for their rights as religious people, and perhaps that their country is so ignorant as to not even understand how it is part of a multicultural and religiously diverse society which is entitled to have its religious beliefs upheld.