

26 November 2018

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Cc: Federal MPs

Dear Prime Minister

Discrimination does not belong in faith-based schools

We write as Principals and Heads representing a range of Independent faith-based schools across denominations. We are convinced that our faith-based schools can maintain their religious values, beliefs and ethos without recourse to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

We are concerned there is still public confusion about what legal rights faith-based schools require, in order to maintain their ethos and identity. We are also deeply disturbed by ongoing reports of anxiety and distress among our students, alumni, parents and others in the wider community.

In our view, religious exemptions that permit discrimination have no place in our schools.

We are pleased you have publicly committed to remove at least one of these exemptions by the end of the year, and assure you of our support for the removal of all unnecessary exemptions in the federal *Sex Discrimination Act*.

Discrimination in any form is unacceptable. It jeopardises the safe and supportive school environments that are so central to our mission. It undermines the potential of individuals and the cohesion of communities.

We know how damaging discrimination can become when young people in our schools are bullied, excluded and made to feel inferior. We do not want this to occur. The wellbeing and pastoral care of our young people is paramount, as is the wellbeing and pastoral care of our staff, and our wider school communities.

Our shared religious ethos and values define the nature of our communities, and those same values call us to welcome families, however they are formed and whatever they look like. Our schools are deeply enriched by this diversity. This welcome to all people gives physical expression to the values and ethos we espouse.

We cherish being faith-based schools, and we proudly talk about what that means with the community. This includes the participation of students and staff in the whole life of our schools: in worship and ritual, in learning, in community service, and in our care for each other.

All these are expressions of a deeply inclusive commitment to our faith-based ethos and values. All of these we can do without discrimination. In fact, we must.

We urge Parliament to act without delay to remove unnecessary and damaging exemptions currently provided in the *Sex Discrimination Act*. The Parliament can remove confusion by conveying in simple terms that faith-based schools do not need to discriminate in order to operate.

Yours sincerely,

Principals of the following schools:

Jim Laussen

Overnewton Anglican
Community College, VIC

Philip Grutzner

Carey Baptist
Grammar School, VIC

David Baker

Gippsland Grammar
School, VIC

Jason Bartell

John Septimus Roe Anglican
Community School, WA

Sholto Bowen OAM

Huntingtower, VIC

Rebecca Cody

Geelong Grammar, VIC

Kim Cohen

The Glennie School, QLD

Steven Davies

St Mark's Anglican
Community School, WA

Russell Deer

Braemar College, VIC

Helen Drennan

Wesley College, VIC

Adrian Farrer

Cathedral College
Wangaratta, VIC

Polly Flanagan

Shelford Girls' Grammar
School, VIC

Gerard Foley

Ivanhoe Grammar School, VIC

Anne Ford

John Wollaston Anglican
Community School, WA

Bradley Fry

Tintern Grammar School, VIC

Toni Riordan

St Aiden's Anglican Girls School, QLD

Andrew Watt

Emanuel School, NSW

Kerr Fulton-Peebles

Esperance Anglican
Community School, WA

Stephen Gale

Cobram Anglican
Grammar School, VIC

Ian Gamack

The Cathedral School, QLD

Meg Hansen

Westbourne Grammar, VIC

Cameron Herbert

St Paul's Grammar School, VIC

Felicity House

Peter Carnley Anglican
Community School, WA

Ted Kosicki

Georgina Molloy Anglican
School, Busselton WA

Tony Larkin

Penleigh and Essendon
Grammar School, VIC

Elisabeth Lenders

Kingswood College, VIC

Marc Light

The King David School, VIC

Benjamin Lomas

Peter Moyes Anglican
Community School, WA

Gea Lovell

Newhaven College, VIC

Geoff McLay

West Moreton Anglican
College, QLD

Craig Merritt

St Luke's Anglican School, QLD

Andy Muller

Scotch Oakburn College, TAS

Geoff Newton

Hillbrook Anglican School, QLD

Itzik Sztokman
United Jewish Education Board

Belinda Provis
All Saints College, WA

Darren Pitt

The Springfield Anglican
College, QLD

Adrian Pree

St James' Anglican School
Alkimos, WA

Gary Racey

St George's Anglican Grammar
School, WA

Annette Rome

St Margaret's and Berwick
Grammar School, VIC

Kerry Robertson

Frederick Irwin Anglican
School, WA

Melinda Scash

Highview College, VIC

Cherylyn Skewes

Leibler Yavneh College, VIC

David Shepherd

Ballarat Clarendon College, VIC

Mark Sly

Coomera Anglican College,
QLD

Vicki Steer

Cornish College, VIC

Jeremy Stowe-Lindner

Bialik College, VIC

Mark Torriero

Goulbourn Valley Grammar
School, VIC

Diana Vernon

Methodist Ladies' College, VIC

Jenny Williams

Firbank Grammar School, VIC

Joe Wright

Fraser Coast Anglican
School, QLD

Helen Greenberg

Sholem Aleichem College, VIC