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School employers have nothing to fear from modern community standards

The [ALRC Report to the Federal Government](#) lays out common-sense updates to the special discriminatory privileges afforded to faith-based school employers.

The Australian community rightly rejects discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation or pregnancy; however, thousands of employees working in faith-based schools have historically been denied these basic discrimination protections at work.

IEU members have [shared distressing stories](#) of the humiliation and disadvantage they suffered under antiquated discrimination exemptions. IEU [workforce research in 2021](#) found that 48% of Catholic school staff had either witnessed or been subjected to discrimination in their workplace.

The Federal Government must not delay on their clear election commitment to update the laws in line with reasonable community standards, while at the same time ensuring the ability of religious schools to continue to build communities of faith central to their ethos and character.

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In previous defence of their special right to discriminate, employers variously claimed they don't use the exemptions and don't discriminate, while at the same time arguing the exemptions were needed to protect the values of faith-based schools.

Such obvious contradictions are glaring, and at odds with the experience in other jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory, [where in 2022 exemptions were removed](#) with no adverse impact on the operation, ethos or mission of faith schools.

No schools closed. No religious freedoms were harmed.

Let's not confuse the argument – discrimination is different to staff conduct & work duties

IEU members accept they have a general duty of fidelity to their employer. A teacher, for example, speaking openly in class against the ethos of their employer would be in breach of their contract obligations and open to disciplinary action.

Such scenarios are separate to discrimination. Schools don't need a special right to discriminate to enforce reasonable workplace conduct already governed by extensive case and industrial law.

Parents simply want the best school staff and best teachers possible

Australian schools are in the midst of a staffing crisis with teacher attraction and retention at record lows. There has never been a more critical time for schools to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for our next generation of teachers and school support staff.

The parents of our students value and respect the staff in their local school community. They want the best for their children and for them to be taught and cared for by the best teachers possible.