



## Proposed Victorian legislation proves urgency of federal religious discrimination bill

The Victorian Government has announced sweeping new reforms to the employment rights of religious institutions. Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes will introduce legislation in the coming months to remove crucial religious freedom protections.

“We hope the Andrews Government honours the multi-cultural diversity of Victoria and seeks to uphold the human rights of all citizens. Institutions established for religious purposes, such as Islamic schools, should not be forced to adopt secular values that run contrary to their beliefs and consciences”, said Freedom for Faith Executive Director Rohan McHugh.

“Attorney-General Symes has proposed these laws to ensure people don’t have to “hide who they are.” We hope she affords the same view to the people who established religious schools, with the intention of passing on their faith to future generations. If these schools cannot appoint staff that affirm their values, they no longer have religious freedom.”

A new ‘inherent requirements’ test will severely narrow the freedom of schools to appoint staff in accordance with their doctrinal commitments.

“The real effect of the proposed ‘inherent requirements’ test would be to give the Government and secular courts the power to adjudicate theological questions for religious institutions. This is an unacceptable intrusion upon religious freedom,” Mr McHugh said.

Suggestions have been made that these laws seek to bring Victoria into the 21st century, in accordance with community expectations.

“Community sentiments on complex issues like transgenderism are not yet fully understood and are far from settled. For example, the non-religious [LGB Alliance](https://lgballiance.org.au/) hold that “current gender ideologies are pseudo scientific and present a threat to people whose sexual orientation is towards the same sex”.<sup>1</sup> Equal sensitivity must therefore be shown to all Australians, religious and non-religious alike,” Mr McHugh said.

“Along with the Conversion and Suppression Practices Bill passed earlier in the year, these proposals are making it harder to trust that the Victorian Government is attempting to grasp the nature of religious freedom rights in good-faith. It is therefore critical that the federal Government pass the Religious Discrimination Bill to protect Australians from these erosions to freedom of association, conscience and religion.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lgballiance.org.au/>