

FREEDOM MATTERS

QUARTERLY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM UPDATE



Current Threats

This table sets out various threats to religious freedom, a description of the threat, the threat level (how serious) and what action you can take.

Overall Threat Level to Religious Freedom: **HIGH**



Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Threat Level	Available Action
Conversion Practices Ban (<i>Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024</i>) According to guidance released by ADNSW, pastoral conversations or prayer that are ‘directed to changing or suppressing’ a person’s sexuality or gender identity consistent with Scripture would constitute a conversion practice (even where the person requested the support or prayer). This is a threat for bible colleges, ministers, churches, faith-based accommodation providers and parents and other family members. The concerning approach of ADNSW on this and their FAQs can be found here: https://antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au/discrimination/conversion-practices.html	Anti-Discrimination NSW (ADNSW) will take a ‘maximalist’ view of “changing or supressing”. In their view, praying with someone at their request not to act on same-sex sexual desires is a conversion practice. There are both civil and criminal penalties (a criminal offence if the practice can be said to cause ‘substantial ... mental or physical harm’ or ‘endanger the individual’s life’) irrespective of whether the prayer or conversation was sought by the complainant, or otherwise consented to. The interpretation adopted by ADNSW is not consistent with the Premier’s commitment that ‘an individual of their own consent seeking guidance through prayer will not be banned.’	NSW Labor Party	 HIGH	1. Contact your State MP. https://contactyourmp.org.au/nsw-cp/ By expressing your concern to your local member, it will support those efforts. 2. Sign a joint letter with other pastors in your area – contact your Mission Area Leader. 3. Pray and familiarise yourself with your legal obligations. Note the information sent by the Archbishop on this issue.

Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Threat Level	Available Action
NSWLRC Anti-Discrimination Act Review Potential changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act could see religious schools and other faith-based bodies lose their ability to operate according to their deeply held beliefs by imposing restrictions on their right to employ staff or leaders and requiring a judge to consider whether all their decisions are 'reasonable and proportionate'. Religious schools would also lose the ability to have school rules that reflect their religious ethos. Consultation Paper can be found here: https://lawreform.nsw.gov.au/documents/Current-projects/ada/cp24/ADA_CP24.pdf	A summary of the Sydney Diocesan Submission on desired amendments is in the Appendix (below). A review on ADA process (the making, accepting and determining of complaints) is forthcoming. The risk is that changes to process (like those proposed below in NT) make the 'process the punishment' where vexatious, or unmeritorious claims are accepted by ADNSW and a defendant then has to expend time and money to defend a complaint at a Tribunal.	NSW Law Reform Commission	 HIGH (pending the report)	1. Contact your State MP. The Diocese has made a submission to the NSW LRC & Bp Stead has appeared at the Inquiry. - By expressing your concern to your local member, it will support those efforts. 2. Sign a joint letter with other pastors in your area – contact your Mission Area Leader.
Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Threat Level	Available Action
NSW Hate Crimes Sackar Review of the <i>Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Act 2025</i>. The breadth of existing section 93ZAA vilification provision based on the incitement of hatred could become a 'blasphemy law' by another name by criminalising the criticism of one religion by another.	New s93ZAA addressing hate speech is currently under review. If the <i>Inciting Racial Hatred</i> Amendment is not repealed it has a 3yr sunset clause, but will remain the law until March 2028. One proposal is to expand the provision to apply to LGBTIQ+ attributes will limit teaching on matters such as marriage, sexuality or gender identity. Section 93ZAA has	NSW Labor / Attorney-General	 HIGH	1. Contact your State MP to express your concern about the precedent set by this legislation, and that it should not be expanded further. Familiarise yourself with the diocesan submission. 2. Sign a joint letter with other pastors in your area – contact your Mission

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	risks to religious freedom in preaching, teaching, proselytising and living out of beliefs by people of faith. The 'religious text' exemption does not adequately preserve the religious freedoms of believers to communicate genuine religious teaching or discussion or proselytise.			Area Leader.
Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Threat Level	Available Action
NT Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2025 As at November 2025, NT is the first Australian jurisdiction to require religious schools to employ LGBTIQ+ teachers who do not support the beliefs of the school. The CLP made a pre-election commitment to restore religious freedoms previously removed by Labor, but they have reneged on this commitment. This presents a real and present risk for NSW religious schools as 'progressive' reforms in other jurisdictions become a model for reform in NSW. As noted above, the NSWLRC is currently conducting a review of the religious schools exemptions.	The proposed Religious Exemptions under new s35B prevent schools from preferencing employment in accordance with their faith where a person is LGBTIQ+, or even where they engage (for example) in sex work. Schools also cannot set standards of behaviour for their staff outside of school hours. The complaints process amendments will remove the requirement for the Commissioner to "evaluate" a complaint before referring it to the Tribunal. This new, unfettered discretion could result in the bar being very low for a complaint to go to Tribunal - meaning that the process becomes the punishment.	Country Liberal Party (NT)	 MODERATE	1. Encourage those you know in NT to make submissions to the NT AG and to contact their local member seeking the restoration of the rights of religious schools. The NT Fact Sheet on proposed changes in the initial Bill can be found here: https://adc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1554076/ADC-Amendment-Bill-Fact-Sheet.pdf

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Voluntary Assisted Dying The <i>Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022</i> (NSW) currently requires faith-based health facilities and aged care providers to allow euthanasia to be performed on their premises.	In October 2025 Susan Carter MP introduced a Bill to amend the Act to permit such bodies to ‘take reasonable steps to facilitate the transfer of the person to a place where the person may self-administer a voluntary assisted dying substance’ off their premises. Both major parties have permitted a conscience vote on the Bill.	The Act was introduced by Alex Greenwich MP (Independent) and approved for debate by the Labor Party. The amendment was introduced by Susan Carter (Liberal).	 HIGH	Use the Freedom for Faith resources to write to your local MP in support of the Bill: Write to NSW MLCs on VAD - Contact Your MP
VIC Inquiry into Cults The VIC inquiry into cults, coercive control and high demand groups may pose serious risks to religious freedom if those issues are not carefully defined. Poorly drafted laws could criminalise religious practices. Note, for example, the guidelines for the Inquiry which describe cult ‘tactics’ and ‘methods’ https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/cofg/guidance-note The question before the Committee/Parliament is whether techniques used by groups to attract and retain members amounts to coercion that should be criminalised.	Finding a legally enforceable definition of what comprises a cult is notoriously difficult. Poorly drafted, such a definition could include mainstream or high-commitment religious groups. The inquiry states: “A cult is best understood as a group defined not by its beliefs, but by its behaviour.” Concerningly, the inquiry describes ‘recruitment tactics’ of cults as including ‘offering belonging, promising transformation or salvation’ or providing ‘spiritual guidance’ (esp when someone is suffering ‘emotional distress’ or going through a ‘vulnerable stage’) and ‘offering exclusive access to truth’ – which are all activities of mainstream churches. Another ‘tactic’ is ‘gradual indoctrination’: ‘Slowly introducing	VIC Labor Party	 HIGH	1. Submissions to the Inquiry have closed. Freedom for Faith has made a submission. Pray that the Inquiry Committee will note the concerns raised in that submission, and that the definition of cult does not include mainstream religious groups. You can read the Freedom for Faith submission here https://freedomforfaith.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/VIC-Cults-Inquiry-Submission.pdf

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	core beliefs and increasing commitment through rituals, group activities, or study sessions'. The Inquiry is considering whether such religious groups should lose tax exemption or be subject to financial audits. Some advocacy groups have made submissions which have framed evangelical Christianity and other faiths as inherently coercive; equating religious devotion with psychological harm, including in respect of controversial or unpopular beliefs on matters such as sexuality, gender identity or marriage. The Inquiry is also critical of churches that refuse to admit members that don't share or live consistently with the contested beliefs.			

Future Threats

Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Threat Level	Available Action
Federal Human Rights Act / Bill of Rights Proposed in 2023 by the Government-controlled Commonwealth Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. Various groups continue to advocate for Australia to have a Federal Human Rights Act.	The proposed Act in 2023 was deeply flawed and limited freedom of religion rights; parental rights were diminished including the right to choose education in conformity with their religion; and other limitations on rights in a way that contradicts the <i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i>. Through the broad, ill-defined definitions of human rights and the mechanism defining permissible limitations, the Act would transfer decisions over religious matters from the legislature to judges, who cannot be unelected. Their decisions are not easily unwound due to the effusive nature of the rights being determined.	Australian Labor Party Human Rights Law Centre – advocating for change.	 MODERATE	1. Keep informed about proposals for a Bill of Rights. 2. When asked, please make a submission [link will be emailed when this is known].
Human Rights Bill 2025 (NSW) Proposed in October 2025 by the NSW Greens.	The Bill exhibits all the problems associated with the Federal Human Rights Bill, as outlined above. In addition, the Bill fails to protect the right of parents to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, required under Australia's international commitments. The Bill would also permit the Government to limit a person's 'freedom to have or adopt a religious belief'. This too is inconsistent with Australia's international obligations.	NSW Greens	 HIGH	1. Keep informed about proposals for a Bill of Rights. 2. When asked, please make a submission [link will be emailed when this is known].

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WA Conversion Practices Ban In 2022 the WA Govt announced they were planning to ban 'LGBTIQA+ conversion practices'. The government produced a Consultation Paper (CP) in 2022 that was shared with some groups but not released publicly. It was reportedly modelled on the VIC legislation. The WA Attorney General announced in 2025 that a ban on conversion therapy will be introduced to Parliament by the end of the year but without providing any details.	If the CP uses a definition of 'conversion practice' based on VIC legislation, then "suppress" will include advocating celibacy, or simply encouraging someone not to act on a sexual desire. 'Sexual orientation' will including sexual activity – which means that teaching anyone to have sexual restraint (e.g., telling a married man not to commit adultery) would be a suppression practice. Placing limitations on a transgender person's expression of their preferred gender in practice (eg, in respect of uniforms, facilities use etc) or praying for such a person to follow the Bible would also be unlawful. If the proposals were similar to those in NSW outlined above, this would mean that churches would need to admit persons who do not share or live in accordance with religious teaching as leaders or members, with all the accordant power and responsibilities of those offices. This would fundamentally alter the character of religious bodies.	WA Labor Party	 MODERATE	1. Encourage those you know in WA to be prepared to make submissions to their local member if legislation is introduced, or to an inquiry if it is announced. 2. Consider whether matters arising in that debate provide impetus for reform of the equivalent NSW laws.

Past Threats

Threat	Description	Responsible Party	Result	Impact of RF Advocate/Clergy Activity
Federal Religious Discrimination Bill (RDB) & Religious Discrimination Generally Failure to protect religious freedom at a Federal level (and in two States). Five versions of a Federal Religious Discrimination Bill (under the Morrison Liberal, and Albanese Labor governments) have been proposed.	Australia has no Federal legislation to protect people from religious discrimination, or to protect the rights of people of faith to hold, express or live out their faith. Some States have religious discrimination legislation; however the protection is often limited. Religious believers resident in NSW have no protection from religious discrimination and SA protection is very limited. Currently it is lawful for the Commonwealth Government to discriminate against individuals and corporations on the basis of their religion. The rights of schools and church organisations to preference employment (for example) is permitted as 'exemptions' under the Sex Discrimination Act – which implies that religious freedom is a form of discrimination – rather than being a protected as a positive right (eg under Article 18 of the <i>International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights</i>.)	Australian Labor Party Liberal Party	An RDB has not been achieved and religious freedom remains unprotected at a Federal level apart from the exemptions in the Sex <i>Discrimination Act</i>.	An RDB was proposed by the Albanese government. Freedom for Faith, Sydney Anglicans and many other religious freedom advocates made submissions, appeared before various Senate enquiries and lobbied politicians on the issue of religious freedom. Faith leaders proposed amendments which would rectify remaining concerns. The Labor government was not willing to progress the Bill (ostensibly due to lack of bipartisan support) however the Liberal party indicated that their willingness to negotiate was subject to the Govt meeting to discuss the proposals by the faith leaders. This has not happened. Without meeting with faith leaders the PM announced that the RDB would not proceed.