

Religious Discrimination

Australian, state and territory laws provide some protections against religious discrimination, but these protections are incomplete. In some situations, those existing legal protections do not provide for enforceable remedies where discrimination is established.

Just as Australians are provided with statutory protection against discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, they should also be provided with equivalent protection against discrimination on the ground of religious belief or practice.

There have been several attempts to legislate religious discrimination protections by successive Australian governments in the past decade. The Australian Human Rights Commission expressed concerns about draft bills that did not achieve an appropriate balancing of rights and sought to provide protection to religious belief or activity at the expense of other rights.

Religious discrimination protections should not limit other human rights in a way that is unnecessary and disproportionate, or in a manner that is otherwise inconsistent with international human rights law.

Complementary changes are required in the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) to ensure exemptions for religious bodies and educational institutions established for religious purposes to discriminate in certain areas are appropriately balanced.

Priority Action

The Australian government should introduce laws prohibiting religious discrimination