

Dear Secretariat,

I am a Priest in the United Ecumenical Catholic Church – Australia and I support the passing of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012, in the current parliamentary term. Sexual orientation and gender identity protections in federal law are long overdue.

I am aware of many people who work for religious organisations who fear losing their employment if their sexual orientation is discovered by their employer. This is wrong and these exemptions must stop. If these same religious organisations fires someone because they were Aboriginal or Irish there would be outrage – there should be similar outrage over the potential to terminate/refuse employment to people who are homosexual.

As a Priest I visit people in religiously based aged care facilities, and I am saddened that most of these people are forced to deny their sexuality for fear of discrimination. Can you imagine the pain this causes couples who have been in a committed relationship for decades to have to deny their love and their fundamental self? I cant imagine my mother not being able to express her love for my father of being able to advocate for his needs as his partner simply because they loved each other - they can be open about their relationship in the Lutheran run nursing home where he is cared for. This right should be available for all because the kind of love expressed is no different!

I am Priest. My partner and I have a child. We have been in a committed relationship for over 7 years. Our relationship was made valid by our church in a Holy Union. We pay our taxes. We volunteer in our local community. We live morally, ethically and lawfully. We should not be discriminated against by other religious organisation's who receive taxpayer funded money to provide a service to all.

The exemptions for religious organisations must be removed - No organisations, religious or not, that are taxpayer-funded must be allowed to be outside the Anti-Discrimination Act.

If religious organisations are to be granted permanent exceptions in the Anti-Discrimination Act, this must be more widely known in the community. Currently many people are unaware that religious organisations are allowed to discriminate, until they become a victim of such discrimination. The draft Bill should require religious organisations to publish a statement advising they can discriminate legally, on their website, job employment applications, brochures and other promotional material advertising services. This would forewarn potential victims of discrimination and provide accountability to citizens before they decide to purchase goods and services or apply for a job.

Sincerely

Narelle Oliver-Braddock

Parish Priest

Community of St. Mary Magdalene – Hemmant

United Ecumenical Catholic – Australia