

Victorian Christian Schools Under Threat

17 September 2021

The proposed changes to the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* announced by the Andrews Government yesterday will have a huge impact on the staffing model of Christian schools in Victoria and will fundamentally change the nature of Christian schools forever. Under the proposed changes, religious organisations and schools will only be able to employ people of faith where the Government decides that religious beliefs *are critical to the job*.

“For our schools to effectively fulfil their mission and ethos, it is crucial that *all* staff employed share the values and beliefs of the school,” said Vanessa Cheng, Executive Officer of the Australian Association of Christian Schools.

“Our schools take seriously their responsibility to shape their students’ moral character and spiritual development. Parents who choose our schools understand and want this for their children. All subjects in Christian schools are taught through the prism of faith. It makes no difference whether it’s the maths teacher, the science teacher, or the outdoor education teacher, they’re all involved in the spiritual formation of our children.”

“Christian schools don’t see religion as a separate subject that only the school chaplain can teach and talk about. Teachers in our schools read the Bible and pray with students, they integrate faith into their lessons and talk about how their experience of faith impacts their everyday life.”

“The informal relationships which students develop with non-teaching staff across a school can also have an incredibly positive impact,” said Ms Cheng, “we truly believe it takes a village to raise a child.”

“The lack of understanding, tolerance and respect shown by the Victorian Government to our Christian beliefs and schools is astounding. Our schools have been through so much in dealing with impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through school closures, online learning and focusing on the well-being of their students.”

“This blatant attack on the ability of Christian schools to employ people of faith is designed to make religious freedom a second class right in Victorian society. Haven’t our schools been through enough?”

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Media contact:

Vanessa Cheng
0416 277 372