



Bishop Backs Clarity and Respect in Proposed Anti-Discrimination Law Changes

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Catholic Bishop of Darwin, Bishop Charles Gauci, has welcomed proposed changes to the Northern Territory's *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*, which aim to restore balance between religious freedom, respectful speech, and anti-discrimination protections.

"I believe it removes ambiguities and possible unnecessary litigation," Bishop Gauci said. "Previously, protections for religious schools to employ people who share their faith, particularly in leadership were only outlined in Hansard. They were not enshrined in law. I was advised this left room for potential litigation."

From what we have seen, we feel these changes support respectful freedom of speech, allowing people of faith to share their beliefs without fear of legal action simply because someone feels offended, while still protecting against real harm such as hate or serious ridicule. They also help preserve the identity of religious schools by allowing them to employ staff who share their values and beliefs, ensuring they can remain true to their mission.

Bishop Gauci emphasised that the Church does not support any form of discrimination.

"I certainly don't support discrimination based on race, creed, orientation, or other attributes," he said. "This isn't about discrimination it's about protecting the rights of people of faith and ensuring religious communities can continue to live and teach in line with their beliefs."

He also called for respectful dialogue.

"We must always be respectful, especially when we disagree," Bishop Gauci said. "This legislation recognises the right to express religious belief without fear of misinterpretation or legal action where offence is not intended."

+Charles Gauci
Catholic Bishop of Darwin

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