



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DARWIN



23 November 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters

As you know the amendments to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* passed through parliament last night. We are certainly supportive of non-discrimination. It is our Christian responsibility and duty to reach out to the vulnerable and everyone who is excluded in any way. As you know, I have had some serious concerns about some aspects of the amendments that would have hindered our ability to have authentic Catholic Schools and could also have affected our ability to have authentic Catholic celebrations.

There was a public statement made by the NT Attorney General in Parliament last night that we still have the ability to expect our school leaders, Principals, Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals Religious Education and Religious Education Coordinators to be active members of our Church family. He also said that we still have the right to expect all those who work in our schools respect the Catholic ethos. This means that whether they are Catholic or not, they would need to respect and teach within our schools what is expected in our faith.

He also made it clear there will be no impairments to us conducting our Church services as normal. Of course, I would expect that our church services are conducted in a manner that are truly respectful of all while still proclaiming the truth of our Catholic beliefs and faiths.

I would have preferred that these things were enshrined in the legislation, however since public statements were made in parliament, and have been recorded in Hansard, it is clear that the intention of the legislation was what was stated publicly and hence any dispute would take that into account.

I want to continue ongoing conversations with Government whilst continuing to seek advice from our lawyers to try to ensure that these statements made in good faith in Parliament will become part of legislation in the future.

Like many of you, I would have preferred more clarity, but I feel quietly confident that the future of our schools will continue to be ensured as authentic Catholic schools.

I would like to thank all of you who made special efforts to make our views clear to Government and the community. A big thank you to all of you who prayed for good outcomes in this situation.

God bless you all.

+ Charles Gauci  
Catholic Bishop of Darwin and the Northern Territory