

June 14, 2024

### **Calling for changes to anti-discrimination laws**

The Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch is calling for proposed changes to both federal and NSW anti-discrimination laws to be implemented in line with reasonable community standards.

At the same time, any changes should ensure the ability of religious schools to continue to build communities of faith central to their ethos and character.

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents more than 32,000 teachers and support, professional and operational staff in non-government educational institutions, including independent schools.

“Schools of faith can continue to thrive without the need to discriminate,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

IEU [workforce research in 2021](#) found that 48% of Catholic school staff had either witnessed or been subjected to discrimination in their workplace.

“School employers have nothing to fear from modern community standards,” said Matthews.

Most employers cannot lawfully discriminate due to an employee’s sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or accessing fertility treatments. Yet faith-based schools still have special exemptions allowing treatment of staff that would be prohibited in the wider community.

“Teachers, school leaders, and school support staff have shared [heartbreaking stories](#) with the IEU of the discrimination they’ve experienced in the workplace,” Matthews said.

The story in The Sydney Morning Herald yesterday is the latest shocking example, illustrating the impact that discrimination on the basis of sexuality can have on hard-working teachers, with the western Sydney music teacher’s termination reportedly having a terrible effect on her mental health.

“Such treatment is unwelcome in today’s workplace and would be unlawful in every other industry.”

The federal government must not delay on their clear election commitment to update the laws and should consider all options necessary.

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