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NSW Equality Bill: Union calls on Alex Greenwich MP to protect school staff and students

The union representing teachers and support staff in non-government schools is deeply concerned about NSW independent MP Alex Greenwich dropping protections for LGBTQI+ teachers, other school staff and students from his Equality Bill. The Bill will be considered by Cabinet today.

At present, non-government school employers can discriminate against school staff by terminating their employment because of their sexual orientation or transgender status. They can expel students for the same reason.

“We are disappointed that Mr Greenwich did not consult the union representing the teachers and school staff who are impacted,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

“Teachers, support staff and school leaders have shared heartbreaking stories with the IEU of the discrimination they’ve experienced in the workplace.”

The IEU represents more than 32,000 teachers and support, professional, administrative and operational staff in non-government and faith-based schools in NSW and the ACT.

Mr Greenwich was [reported in yesterday’s Sun Herald](#) as dropping proposed protections for school staff pending a review of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 by the NSW Law Reform Commission. The NSW Labor government referred the Act for review in July 2023.

“But there are no guarantees this long-running review will recommend protections for teachers and school staff in faith-based schools,” Matthews said. “Nor is there any guarantee the NSW government will legislate recommendations arising from the review.”

At present, the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act allows private educational authorities to discriminate against people on the basis of their sex, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity or marital or domestic status.

“Such treatment is unwelcome in schools and would be unlawful in every other industry,” Matthews said.

“School employers have nothing to fear from modern community standards – they can still thrive without the need to discriminate. Changes to the Act could still allow religious schools to build communities of faith central to their ethos and character.

“The union calls on Mr Greenwich to restore protections for LGBTQI+ school staff and students to his Equality Bill, and for the NSW government to implement full protections from all forms of discrimination in non-government schools.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

Authorised by Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary