

**Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG+)**  
**Submission to Proposed Religious Discrimination Bill re Second Amendments**

**Introduction:**

Mr. Morrison regularly tells us that this legislation will be for all Australians. Not surprisingly, we most definitely disagree with these comments. We also keep hearing about a developing “them and us” mentality. Sadly, I do agree with this comment, but I also feel it will escalate if this legislation passes with Christians on one side and everyone else on the other side. Everyone in this country agrees in religious freedom, but the vast majority do not believe in religious privilege.

I am submitting this submission as National Spokesperson for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG+) which is a secular, inclusive, peer support group for parents. The plus is intended to show we support all parents with LGBTIQ sons and daughters. PFLAG+ groups are of varying size and strength and organized by volunteers with no financial support from government.

PFLAG+ has been supporting families in Australia since the late 1980's. Our goals are to support families, provide community education and advocate for our children's rights.

As Australia's primary support group for parents with LGBTIQ sons and daughters we are becoming more concerned than ever about the negative direction the proposed legislation is taking, not only for our loved ones, but those with disability, women, culture and those in the workplace with weakened inclusion policies.

**The amendments will mean:**

Our LGBTIQ sons and daughters will have to go back into the closet if they want to work for religious based charities, aged care facilities and hospitals.

Two concerns come from this – (a) our loved ones will develop mental health issues because of the stress of not living their lives honestly and openly – which will impact on their standard of work and time off due to anxiety. (b) Staff employed who fit the criteria are not necessarily the most competent or experienced because the number of staff to choose from will be decreased.

Our LGBTIQ sons and daughters can be refused the right to hire venues, which will make it very difficult for those living in regional or rural areas.

Another huge concern is health practitioners will not be compelled to assist people in medical procedures or services if they are against their religious beliefs. This will include medications for HIV, PEP and PREP, IVF, terminations, a hysterectomy, medical support of trans people etc.

Insults, deliberate or otherwise should never be condoned regardless of to whom the comments are directed or why. People should never be told they are broken, have Satan in them or can be healed if they pray enough.

The degradation, hurt and pain this religious discrimination bill will create and condone if passed into legislation will provide Christians with the privilege to tell individuals who don't fit their Christian criteria they are considered broken, have Satan in them, lack morals, depraved or whatever other terminology they choose with free reign.

Worse still the consequences for the person experiencing the hurt and pain can have their employment terminated, experience mental health issues, feel shame and helpless to protect themselves by complaining to hierarchy. But Mr. Morrison says this is for all Australians. However, many do not have the same opinion.

PFLAG+ set up a website and within 24 hours selected MP's received more than 600 each. The responses we received were extremely alarming due to the angst of the vast majority of those who made individual comments.

## **GENERAL CONCERNS OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY**

Many who identified as LGBTIQ made mention of their disabilities. Some were visible others not so. But, all were anxious about the impact the Bill would have on them personally, including their employment and their personal needs regarding their health care.

Others were confused about how Australia is well known for having a secular society but this legislation was planning on being introduced.

Some believe the bill will lead to a divisive hate filled society

Some were concerned about hate speech and equated religious discrimination to racism and sexism.

Some were shocked that after the Sexual Abuse Inquiry Religious bodies had the right to judge anybody.

Some were concerned about loved ones wellbeing if this legislation is introduced.

Many believe the legislation will create harm/and people didn't vote for discrimination when they voted for marriage equality

Religious charities should pay tax if they can refuse service to people based on their religious beliefs

Some believe it's hypocritical because they already have freedom of religion

Several parents are concerned about the treatment of their children whether they be trans, have mental health issues or just general health needs

Several Christians who responded don't understand how this bill will improve their rights

Some people want a plebiscite

Many adult trans people are fearful about their health needs and general treatment in society

A Christian gay man says he is persecuted because of his sexual orientation not his religion.

Others believe Australia must keep religion out of politics to ensure equality for all citizens.

Many believe there is no impediment for people of faith to practice their religion and generally no need for the Bill

People of faith should be protected by anti discrimination laws; it should not enable them to persecute others.

Many have fears health care workers will be able to put their faith above peoples best interest which can have dangerous consequences.

Responses were received from Ministers of religion, teachers and psychologists and medical practitioners all describing how they have supported LGBTIQ through crisis and how they personally are fearful of the impact this proposed legislation will have on the community.

Some asked why would anyone want to pass discriminatory legislation against anyone?

Recommendations:

Charities do not pay taxes. However, generally they have supported all people regardless of their financial circumstances, marital status, sexual orientation race or culture. Now the same charity who doesn't pay tax can now pick and choose who and how they help eg a couple living in a de facto relationship can be placed at the bottom of a priority list regardless of their need.

Our recommendation would be to make such charities that overlook those in need because they don't fit the criteria - pay tax.

Our recommendation regarding the amendments to Tasmania's anti discrimination legislation would be to use them as a guide line. World's Best Practice is to elevate not lower standards. In this case, all Australians should know their freedom of human rights have been improved not weakened. Legislators should question their motives, if their intention is to provide privilege to a minority, while deliberately and actively lessening Tasmanians rights.

All States should have their rights strengthened like Tasmania. Christians already have freedom to practice their beliefs openly and without fear.

Generally, if this legislation should pass, parents believe a sign should be placed at entrance of business, on their website and stationary and letting it be known service isn't provided to LGBTIQ people and others on their radar which will minimize insult, embarrassment or ridicule.

In conclusion, the PFLAG+ parents of this country sincerely hope that logic will prevail. The only reason the country is having this debate is because the Yes Campaign won and we now have marriage equality. Fear is the prime concern and not an excuse to discriminate so many groups and minorities. When people voted for marriage equality they didn't vote

religious discrimination. So I would suggest if Mr. Morrison doesn't want Australians to have a "them and us" mentality, he should scrap this proposed legislative fiasco.

Yours sincerely  
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