

Hindus lobby for Religious Freedom in Australia

By : Surinder Jain.

Hindus represented by Hindu Council of Australia along with representatives of Anglican, Catholic, Islamic and Buddhist faiths are meeting various federal MPs and impressing upon them to protect religious freedom and not to pass a law that can suppress religious freedom as an unintended consequence of anti-discrimination.

The main points being emphasized to law makers are :

1. There should no ambiguity in law that can lead to unnecessary litigation.
2. Religious Freedom is in the charter of United Nations to which Australia is a signatory.
3. Faith based schools should continue to be able to segregate schools and activities (e.g. sports) based on gender.
4. No religious institute should be restricted from teaching or propagating the teachings of their faith.
5. No religious institute should be coerced into doing or making its resources available to teach or support any idea that is not in conformity with its faith.
6. Courts can not interpret faith related matters and that interpretation of scriptures, philosophies and practices should be left to the faith community.
7. Religious institutes that have been built with the donation of faith members with certain understanding should not be forced to break that understanding in order to conform with new laws being considered.
8. Hindus do not have religious schools in Australia yet but other religions who have religious schools have reported that there have been no significant discrimination events in their schools and that the laws should not be made to fix a problem that does not exist.

Since marriage equality vote in Australia giving equal rights to gay marriages, Australian society and politics has been churning with its implications for religious freedom. Can schools be forced to not only accept and respect gay teachers/students and staff (which is already happening and is not an issue) but also to permit propagation of marriage or other views that are [contrary to their religious teachings](#).



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Both major parties have come out with their views and are aiming for a legislation that in the garb of Anti-Discrimination does not have intended or un-intended effects on religious freedom of Religious schools. A particular focus of the legislation to be discussed in parliament next month is to do with restrictions on faith based schools.

The Prime Minister and his Liberal Party has come out openly in favor of Religious Freedom.

“ *PM ScoMo fights for religious freedom despite the opposition*

“ *Australian Prime Minister – protection of our religious freedoms is synonymous with our identity*

The opposition Labor Party is also making its stand clear. According to a Labor Federal MP, Labor has already pledged to end discrimination against students and teachers in religious schools on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The labor party wants to repeal parts of the Sex Discrimination Act giving exemptions to religious schools to discriminate against children. The party also feels that all Australians should have the right to express their faith freely and without fear of discrimination, for all faiths.

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