Religious Discrimination Bill – Exposure Draft

Your Submission

Aleph Melbourne has been at the forefront of looking after the best interests of same-sex attracted, trans and gender diverse, and intersex people in Melbourne’s Jewish community for well over twenty years. We have continually sought to reduce intolerance by increasing acceptance and celebration of Jewish LGBTIQ+ people.

Aleph Melbourne takes a particular interest in the discrimination LGBTIQ+ people face from within the Jewish community, in addition to any discrimination arising from beyond this community.

Through our work, state and national peak bodies within the Jewish community have formulated positions that are respectful of and inclusive toward LGBTIQ+ people over the last ten years. This lead to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, in 2019, formally apologising for historical mistreatment of LGBTIQ+ people.

A multitude of long-established Jewish primary and secondary educational institutions have declared they do not wish to discriminate against students, teachers and other staff, and parents on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and at the same time have stated categorically that they see no need for legislation enabling such discrimination.

It is uncontroversial to say that anti-Semitism or other rhetoric that specifically targets Jews is unacceptable. Religious practices, identity, heritage and beliefs have been identified by the government as worthy of significant protection, as a general statement of fact.

Yet at the same time the government has not shown any level of regard or concern to protect people on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics.

The exposure draft of the Religious Discrimination Bill advantages one's religious beliefs over a person's real-world existence. We understand that the bill will allow people of religious faith to be able to discriminate against us on the grounds of, for example, being in a legal marriage or on the basis of our gender, with no recourse.

Jewish leaders have called for respect of LGBTIQ+ people, an example that Australian lawmakers should follow.

Aleph Melbourne rejects all aspects of this bill that permit discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people.