The Religious Discrimination Bill is clearly an attempt to guarantee religious freedoms to some degree. This whole approach to law suffers from being inherently binary, with competing freedoms set up, and decision-making in the hands of tribunals which exist because of such laws. Ambiguities abound, and in reality, the costly, lengthy and uncertain process becomes a significant part of the punishment. The bill ought to be appreciated for what it purportedly seeks to do, but there are a number of issues that could be raised.

1. Israel Folau was caught in a dispute as he replied to Rugby Australia's commitment to the 'yes' cause in the same-sex marriage debate. Rugby Australia had no right to speak on behalf of all rugby players, the issue was outside any expertise that it may have thought it possessed, and it placed those within it who disagreed with it in an invidious position. Any religious freedom law must cover such a situation as this. A person who works for a company or organisation that has not vested commitment to any particular religious doctrine or conduct ought to be free from harassment or the fear of dismissal. There are a great many Folau-like cases which have been under-reported or not reported at all.

2. Disagreement is not vilification or hate speech, and it is coercive to place it in such a category. A man such as Archbishop Julian Porteous ought not to be put through a system of attempted legal constraint for expressing Catholic views of marriage. Again, the bill needs to guarantee that such cases cannot happen, and not leave open the option of sending them to anti-discrimination tribunals or the like.

3. Religious schools and charities have been set up according to certain religious and moral tenets, and their rights to employ only such people who share such tenets is a core part of their existence. In this way they differ, for example, from Rugby Australia or similar such organisations.

4. Parents' wishes on matters like 'Safe Schools' and other such programs ought to override the wishes of any education department or school.

5. The right of conscience is God-given and sacrosanct, and ought to be recognised as such. Health workers who object to certain practices (abortion would be one obvious case) should have freedom to do so.

In summary, the bill is lacking clarity - a common failing in such an approach to law - and could well continue the slide witnessed over recent years in favour of litigation, referrals to boards and tribunals, sackings, and general harassment. Christians do not want freedoms to be hateful but freedoms to live out the gospel.