Dear Religious Freedom Consultation,

Please find below my submission to the Attorney General’s consultation on the suite of three religious freedom draft exposure bills.

I thank the government for the robust and genuine protections it seeks to enact through these bills. However, there are some aspects of the prospective legislation that leave me in some doubt as to whether the drafting simply needs improving or that the scope of the protection is actually intentionally much less than would first appear.

I am particularly concerned about protections granted to religious bodies in Clause 10 of the Religious Discrimination Bill 2019. Part 1 of this clause is comprehensive and encouraging, but part 2 defines ‘religious body’ in an excessively narrow way.

According to this definition, a body that is conducted in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of a particular religion is excluded from protection if it engages solely or primarily in commercial activities. But this would mean that Christian hospitals, aged care facilities, bookshops and camps are not protected; not to mention every single Christian small business!

And that means that the many egregious cases of Christian bakers, florists and photographers being targeted by LGBT activists for declining to service homosexual ‘weddings’ can happen in Australia as well!

I sincerely hope that this is an oversight that will be rectified in the final draft of this legislation.