

24 November 2022

School staff welcome *NT Anti-Discrimination Act* reforms

The union representing over 17,000 teachers and staff across Northern Territory and Queensland non-government schools has welcomed the removal of religious discrimination exemptions from the *Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Act*.

Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the union welcomed the reforms which he said would foster inclusion and protect vulnerable staff and students.

“Our union commends the NT parliament for passing these reforms and listening to the voice of IEU members who advocated for the removal of discrimination exemptions for religious schools,” Mr Burke said.

“The new laws will provide greater protection to vulnerable community members, including the LGBTQI+ community and are long overdue.

“We know faith-based schools are more than capable of operating in the absence of these exemptions – the vast majority of them already do so.

“The removal of these exemptions will ensure anti-discrimination law better reflects community values and expectations, particularly given many faith-based organisations are in receipt of public funds,” he said.

Mr Burke said employers still had opportunity at point of engagement to determine if an employee was suitable for the position advertised.

“That has always been the case – what has changed is that an employer cannot exclude someone from consideration just because of who they are,” he said.

Mr Burke said it was time for such reforms to be taken in other states and territories including Queensland.

“The Northern Territory has led the way on this issue and the rest of the country should be prioritising the urgent passing of laws to remove anti-discrimination exemptions to ensure faith-based organisations and schools operate in line with community expectations,” he said.

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