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IEU slams NT government decision to repeal Anti-Discrimination protections

The union representing teachers and support staff in Northern Territory non-government schools has condemned the NT government's plans to reverse changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act* passed by the previous Labor government.

Changes to the NT *Anti-Discrimination Act* made three years ago removed the religious discrimination exemptions that allowed non-government school employers to discriminate against staff and students.

Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the decision to reinstate the religious discrimination exemptions was unacceptable.

"The reinstatement of religious discrimination exemptions is unnecessary, divisive and harmful," Mr Burke said.

"Staff and students in schools should not be discriminated against on the basis of their personal lives," he said.

Mr Burke said faith-based schools were more than capable of functioning in the absence of these exemptions.

"We believe faith-based schools have the capacity and resilience to continue to operate in the absence of discrimination exemptions - the vast majority of them already do so," Mr Burke said.

"Indeed, they have done so quite adequately under the legislation which has been in place."

"The reinstatement of religious discrimination exemptions in the NT does not reflect modern community values and expectations, especially given many faith-based organisations receive public funds," he said.

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

"That has always been the case," he said.

The CLP government's changes will also remove the vilification provision introduced three years ago by the previous Labor government, which made it unlawful to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" another person or group based on characteristics such as race and gender.

"We urge the NT government to reconsider its decision and abandon the proposed changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act*," Mr Burke said.

ENDS

Contact: Emily Campbell, IEU-QNT Communications Officer: ecampbell@ieuqnt.org.au / 0400746175

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) represents more than 17,000 teachers, school support staff, principals, early childhood education and VET and RTO employees across Queensland and the Northern Territory.
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