



2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018

Dear Claremont parents,

You would no doubt be aware of this week's media coverage about the rights of faith based schools and federal anti-discrimination legislation. You may also be aware that I was one of the 34 Principals of Anglican schools across Sydney and beyond, who signed a letter about this matter. The letter which is attached was written to Members of Parliament expressing our wish to be able to select staff who support the Christian ethos, values and mission of our schools. The letter has resulted in considerable misrepresentation and untrue statements in the media.

It is important that I reiterate that Claremont College would never expel, refuse to enrol or discriminate against any family, or their child, on the basis of their sexual orientation. As our Strategic Plan (2016-2020) states "*At Claremont College we see a school that is centred around people and relationships. Claremont College is a school guided by Christian values and is inclusive of all, embracing and valuing cultural diversity. It is a school that welcomes all people.*" We welcome the diversity of all children, staff and parents, and we celebrate the contribution they bring. No staff member's employment is or will be in the future under threat because of their sexuality or relationship status. To date, this school has an exemplary record of providing a safe, nurturing, caring and inclusive culture for students, families and staff and this is our ongoing mission.

As an Anglican school, however, we do ask that all staff uphold the Christian values of the school. The letter expressed the view that schools should be able to select staff who support our ethos. I would expect that parents who chose a Claremont College education would want me to employ staff who are aligned with the expectations that parents place on the school. Further to this, I believe that any organisation, faith based or other, should be able to employ staff who support their mission, suit its values, and who fit the culture of the workplace. Two of our long standing Core Values are;

*Growing and affirming the character, leadership and a sense of purpose for each individual child.*

*Providing a nurturing school community through care and respect for self, others and the environment.*

These are guided by love, grace and integrity.

The response to this issue on social media has been considerable. At one level I applaud some of what has been said because I would be upset with our school community, particularly the views of many ex-students, if they agreed with the false sentiments and statements portrayed by the media and others. I am pleased that there has been a reaction. I would expect nothing less from a parent or an ex-Claremont College student, and I am grateful for them expressing their opinions. Some of the denigrating comments however, are very upsetting to myself and to my family, because one of my personal core values in my life and leadership, stemming from my faith, is to fight against injustice or any form of discrimination. I hope that my reputation speaks for itself in this regard.

None-the-less, I welcome your thoughts should you have any ongoing concerns or should you wish to discuss this further with me. Please call 9399 3217 (x2).

Yours sincerely

Mr Doug Thomas  
**Principal**



# Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

25 October 2018

Open Letter to All Members of Parliament of Australia

As Principals and Heads of Anglican Schools in Greater Sydney and the Illawarra we write this public letter to all members of Parliament of Australia.

There has been quite some discussion recently about the rights of faith-based schools and their current exemptions under federal anti-discrimination legislation. The debate has been polemicised as the right to expel gay students, with little evidence that this occurs, and the right to dismiss gay staff members, again with little evidence that this occurs.

By and large across faith-based schools, the issue at hand is the right to employ staff who support the ethos of the school. Some schools require evidence of an active faith that is consistent with the philosophy and ethos of the school. In other schools, there is a preference for employment of active adherents of the faith, but other staff, who may not personally identify with the faith, are still expected to support the overarching mission and ethos of the school. This is not inconsistent with the practice of most employers and their corporate goals, let alone political parties. It is overly simplistic to state that a teacher merely delivers academic content in the classroom. This ignores the powerful mentor and exemplar role all teachers play, and are expected to play, in the education of young people. Therefore, it is essential that a teacher supports the values, ethos and mission of the school as much as he or she can. It is not appropriate, for example, for a teacher to undermine or denigrate the beliefs and teachings of an employing school. This is a reasonable expectation not only of the employing school but also of many parents and families who have chosen the school for their children's education.

There is no effective protection under Australian law that guarantees religious freedom for both belief and action. This is strange given that it is enshrined in the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Australia has formally ratified. The current exemptions, however clumsy, in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 are really the only significant legal protections available to schools to maintain their ethos and values with regard to core issues of faith. A more general positive right would be far better, but until such time as religious freedom is codified in legislation, the exemptions should remain.

Signatories of Heads of Schools overleaf.

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## NAMES OF SCHOOLS AND HEADS

Mrs Megan Krimmer  
Headmistress  
Abbotsleigh

Mr Graham Anderson  
Principal  
Arden Anglican School

Dr Gareth Leechman  
Principal  
Arndell Anglican School

Mr Phillip Heath  
Headmaster  
Barker College

Mrs Megan Hastie  
Acting Head  
Blue Mountains Grammar School

Mr Don O'Connor  
Headmaster  
Broughton Anglican College

Mr Douglas Thomas  
Principal  
Claremont College

Mrs Maryanne Davis  
Principal  
Danebank Anglican School

Dr David Nockles  
Headmaster  
Macarthur Anglican School

Mr Craig Mansour  
Headmaster  
Macquarie Anglican Grammar School

Mrs Cathie Graydon  
Principal  
Mamre Anglican School

Dr Julie Greenhalgh  
Principal  
Meriden School

Mr Garry Brown OAM  
Headmaster  
Mosman Preparatory School

Mrs Lorrae Sampson  
Principal  
Nowra Anglican College

Mrs Naomi Wilkins  
Principal  
Oran Park Anglican College

The Rev Louis Stringer  
Headmaster  
Orange Anglican Grammar School

Mrs Felicity Grima  
Acting Head  
Penrith Anglican College

Mr Paul Cockrem  
Principal  
Richard Johnson Anglican School

Ms Deb Magill  
Principal  
Roseville College

Mr Peter Fowler  
Principal  
Rouse Hill Anglican College

Mr Anthony Cummings  
Principal  
Shellharbour Anglican College

Dr John Collier  
Head of School  
St Andrew's Cathedral School

Dr Julie Townsend  
Headmistress  
St Catherine's School

Mrs Jann Robinson  
Principal  
St Luke's Grammar School

Mr Brendan Gorman  
Headmaster  
St Peter's Anglican Primary School

Dr Tim Wright  
Headmaster  
Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore)

Mrs Susan Middlebrook  
Principal  
Tara Anglican School for Girls

Mr Tony George  
Headmaster  
The King's School

Mr Ross Whelan  
Principal  
Thomas Hassall Anglican College

Mrs Gaynor MacKinnon  
Principal  
Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College

Mr Tim Bowden  
Headmaster  
Trinity Grammar School

Mrs Judith Nealy  
Head  
The Illawarra Grammar School

Dr Scott Marsh  
Headmaster  
William Clarke College

Dr Stuart Quarmby  
Headmaster  
Wollondilly Anglican College