13 February 2018

The Expert Panel on Religious Freedom
c/o Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
P O Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: religiousfreedom@pmc.gov.au

Dear Panel Members,

We write on behalf of St Andrew’s Cathedral School, Sydney, a co-educational, K-12 school of over 1250 students and St Andrew’s Cathedral Gawura (Indigenous) School, Sydney, a school of 29 students. Our request is that the panel consider the issue of religious freedom in schools in a broad context.

Our schools, as Christian schools under Anglican governance within the Diocese of Sydney, seek to permeate the whole school community with Christian faith. The presentation and carriage of faith extend far beyond formal chapel services and weekly Christian Development classes (basic Christian doctrine and ethics) and therefore encompass far more than the work of the Chaplain. Indeed, we expect all our teaching staff to critically engage with world views as they emerge from curriculum documents and text books. We seek to equip our staff to authentically critique world views from a Christian perspective. We expect all our staff, teaching and non-teaching, to exhibit Christian grace and pastoral care in their interactions with students and parents.

For these reasons, it is absolutely fundamental to our core business that we employ staff with an active Christian faith, and be not subject to penalty for declining to employ staff who do not demonstrate Christian faith. Without such faith, staff will not understand and have rapport with our philosophical stance, and be able to reflect it authentically in their work in the school.

We regard our stance as analogous to that of a political party, which would expect to be able to employ as its functionaries, those with absolute commitment to their particular and indeed partisan stance. Anything less would defeat the purposes or at least diminish the thrust of the organisation.
We respectfully therefore encourage a comprehensive view of the need for Christian schools to be entitled under law to employ Christian staff, and to decline to employ those who do not identify or demonstrate Christian faith.

As an organisation within the Sydney Anglican Diocese we commend and support the submission to this enquiry made by the Standing Committee of the Diocese.

Yours faithfully,

John Collier
Dr John Collier
Head, St Andrew's Cathedral School
Head, St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School

Kanishka Raffel
The Very Rev Kanishka Raffel
Anglican Dean of Sydney
Chairman, St Andrew's Cathedral School
Chairman, St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School