

Victorian Health Sector Joint Statement



Religious Discrimination Bill will have negative impacts on the equitable provision of health care.

We urge Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Attorney-General Christian Porter to ensure that no part of the Religious Discrimination Bill privileges religious interest above the interest of other Australians.

The second draft of the Australian Government's proposed Religious Discrimination Bill has the potential to compromise care for marginalised Victorians and constrain the health sector's ability to provide that care.

As leaders within and advocates for the health and wellbeing of our communities, we strive to provide safe and high-quality healthcare for all people without discrimination.

The primary aim of the Bill is to prohibit religious discrimination; however, even with the recent amendments, there remains a range of exemptions that will allow discrimination to continue and health care to potentially be adversely impacted.

Under the Bill, health practitioners can still refuse to perform certain procedures or dispense certain drugs, provided they refuse to do so for all patients. This means that many people who use health and community services are at risk of having their rights denied or disrespected.

As a result of these unprecedented proposed rules, people who may be the subject of unfavourable religious views, including those seeking access to reproductive services, transgender services and/or contraception, will find it harder to access health care from health professionals.

The LGBTIQ+ community, vulnerable women, minority faith communities and people with disabilities already face barriers to accessing care. This Bill will jeopardise the ability of many people to find health care that is compassionate and non-judgemental.

Laws that privilege religious views over patient health are unacceptable.

We call on our colleagues, community partners and professional associations to join us in making this clear.

