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The Next Parliament Must Protect Religious Freedom

After the abject failure of the 46th Parliament to deliver protections for religious freedom, the 47th Parliament must do better, and deliver on the rhetoric of both parties.

‘The Prime Minister and Opposition Leader have sought to focus on the future in their opening pitches to the nation today’, said Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy at Christian Schools Australia, ‘and that future for our nation must include **strong protections for religious freedom.**’

‘Both the Government and Opposition have talked of the **fundamental importance** of protections against discrimination for people of faith, and the need to ensure that religious bodies can protect their ethos, but more than talk is needed.’

‘It is clear from the 2019 election that Australian’s want their **values protected**, and the **right to choose schools that reflect those values** protected’, he said, ‘everyone acknowledges that people of faith had a **significant impact on the outcome in 2019.**’

‘Candidates across the nation must be clear on **where they stand individually** on this issue’, Mr Spencer said, highlighting the range of views within both party rooms and on the floor of the Parliament during recent debates.

‘If candidates seek to duck this issue, or simply refer questions to campaign headquarters people will see through that and **vote accordingly.**’

‘We saw in the recent South Australian elections that **people of faith cannot be taken for granted**’, he said, noting the strong and consistent support for protections against religious discrimination and of the right of school to choose staff who share their beliefs.

‘The **community support for strong protections is clear**’, Mr Spencer said, referring to independent national polling that indicated:

- 80% of Australians support religious schools employing staff who support their values and beliefs,
- 69% of Australians believe we should have laws protecting against religious discrimination, and
- 81% of Australians support the right of parents to choose a school that reflects their beliefs.

‘All parties and all candidates must make their support for religious freedom crystal clear during this election campaign’.

‘A **better future** rests on better protection of **fundamental human rights**’, Mr Spencer said.

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For all media enquiries:

Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy
[mspencer@csa.edu.au](mailto:m Spencer@csa.edu.au) | 0419 419 224

About Christian Schools Australia

Christian Schools Australia is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating around 72,000 students and employing more than 10,000 staff at more than 180 locations across Australia. CSA is part of the global ACSI network of 24,000 schools educating in excess of 5.5 million students in over 108 countries world-wide.

