



## Leader of the Opposition

His Grace the Most Rev Archbishop Glenn Davies  
Anglican Archbishop of Sydney  
PO Box Q190,  
QVB Post Office  
NSW 1230

Your Grace

I refer to your letter dated 14 March 2019 regarding Labor's proposed amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and Labor's position on religious freedom more generally.

My Labor colleagues and I respect the right of all Australians to practise their religion freely, including the right to practise no religion at all. Ours is a multicultural country of many faiths, which together create the rich fabric of Australian society.

At the same time, Labor is committed to reducing discrimination in Australian society where it can be done in a responsible way that respects freedom of belief and conscience.

We do not believe that freedom of religion and freedom from discrimination are mutually exclusive.

To that end, Labor believes that students of religious schools should be protected from discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality and other attributes covered by the *Sex Discrimination Act*.

We note the issues you raised in your letter around impacts on religious freedom. Labor is not proposing to amend the indirect discrimination provisions of the *Sex Discrimination Act*. Those provisions would continue to allow educational institutions to impose reasonable conditions, requirements or practices on students in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of a particular religion or creed.

As you note in your letter, Labor has also committed to removing the exemptions in the *Sex Discrimination Act* in respect of teachers and other staff of religious schools.

Like the exemption that related to children, many church groups have made clear that they do not use, nor do they want, those exemptions to remain in place.

If Labor wins the next election, we will continue to engage closely with religious leaders about how this may be done in a responsible way that respects the freedom of belief and conscience of religious Australians.

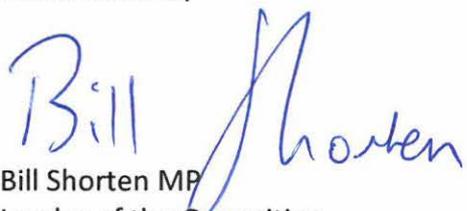
In relation to the broader issue of protection of religious freedom, Labor has made clear that we are open for a discussion around whether or not religious freedom requires greater protection in this country. We supported the establishment of the Ruddock Review into Religious Freedom and consistently called for the Government to make that review public.

I note the Government has indicated its intention to introduce legislation to further protect religious freedom in February. It has so far failed to do so. Labor will consider that legislation when it comes forward, and continue to consult with stakeholders when it is released.

I have no doubt that by working together, we can enhance religious protections whilst at the same time protecting vulnerable Australian – including children – from the risk of discrimination.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Shorten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Shorten MP  
Leader of the Opposition  
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Wednesday, 27 March 2019