

**From:****Sent:** Thursday, August 14, 2025 8:30:55 PM**To:** NSW\_LRC <nsw-lrc@dcj.nsw.gov.au>**Subject:** Anti-Discrimination Act review

I would like to make a submission. Sorry if it's formatted all wrong, I haven't done this before. I'd like to remain anonymous but am happy for my submission to be published.

I am a queer and non-binary-identifying student in the NSW private school system. I've been in the private system in one way or another since Year 7, and attended religious schools because they were the only ones that could provide the supports I needed as a disabled student. I can say from first hand experience that their exception to rules about discrimination against LGBTQ people under the current ADA is actively harmful and dangerous to the students they claim to care for.

I was bullied for years after people found out I identified as queer and almost nothing was done about it. I was outed without my consent on a large Discord server and nothing was ever done. I was chased on my way home from school and nothing was ever done. I was harrassed repeatedly at break times for years and nothing was ever done. I reported continuously for every single incident, I emailed, I left a paper trail, I didn't fight back, I did absolutely everything right and nothing changed. The implication being that I had brought this upon myself with my 'choice'. It was never a choice. I didn't choose to have my gender and sexuality disclosed to my whole year group online, and I didn't choose to be queer, and if I could choose I wouldn't be because it frankly sucks. I fell into self-harm and began experiencing what was later diagnosed as OCD around my gender and sexuality because I was so ashamed and felt so awful about myself. It was around this time that the religious school I was attending decided to bring in a sex education speaker. I will not name them here, but they are known for their anti-LGBTQ views. The speaker described being transgender as simply "a trend" and said that being LGBTQ was a sin and a choice. It was her words, and the words of my peers, left utterly unchallenged by my school, that echoed in my head when I hurt myself every day. I needed to be punished because I was awful and bad and sinful and wrong. I planned and attempted suicide on multiple occasions because of these experiences, and on the last attempt I was pulled out of, and eventually ended up leaving, the school.

I was far from the only queer student at that school, and I was far from the only one being bullied for it. Several of my friends have experienced similar harassment and worse. One was told explicitly they should take their own life because they are transgender. Still nothing ever changed, and nothing has changed since. Self-harm and suicidal ideation and attempts among LGBTQ students were, and are common there, and yet the school

continues to reinforce the message that they have chosen this fate.

This is not an anomaly. I now attend a different religious school, which I again will not name for privacy reasons. They are arguably worse but set up in a way that I cannot receive the degree of harassment I got at the previous school. Still, they have said explicitly on multiple occasions that "to be LGBTQIA is a choice, and the Bible says it is a sin". Yes, they did include intersex, aromantic and asexual people in that statement; I don't think they bothered to look up what things meant before condemning their students. I still struggle with my mental health but have come to peace somewhat with my own queer identity through a lot of work and therapy, and so I am not affected to the degree I was; but many students have not reached that point and they're unlikely to get there because of the constant narrative that you chose this and you will be condemned for it.

I believe that your right to 'religious freedom' ends where my life and the lives of the people I love begin. The meaningless death - and yes, this IS a life-and-death situation - that this exception causes in its current form is completely unacceptable and it breaks my heart every single day. I don't care about your right to "speak the truth" when lives are at stake. A school's first priority should always be the wellbeing of its students, whether public or private. That should not even be up for discussion.

I compel the NSW Government to amend this exception and protect LGBTQ students, no matter where their parents choose to educate them.