

# Freedom in Education in Australia

ECCEN 2023

Understanding the times and knowing what to do

Standing as Christians in a diverse and pluriform society

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# The Land Down Under ...

## Enrolments (August 2022)

- Government schools (64.5%)
- Catholic schools (19.7%)
- Independent schools (15.9%)

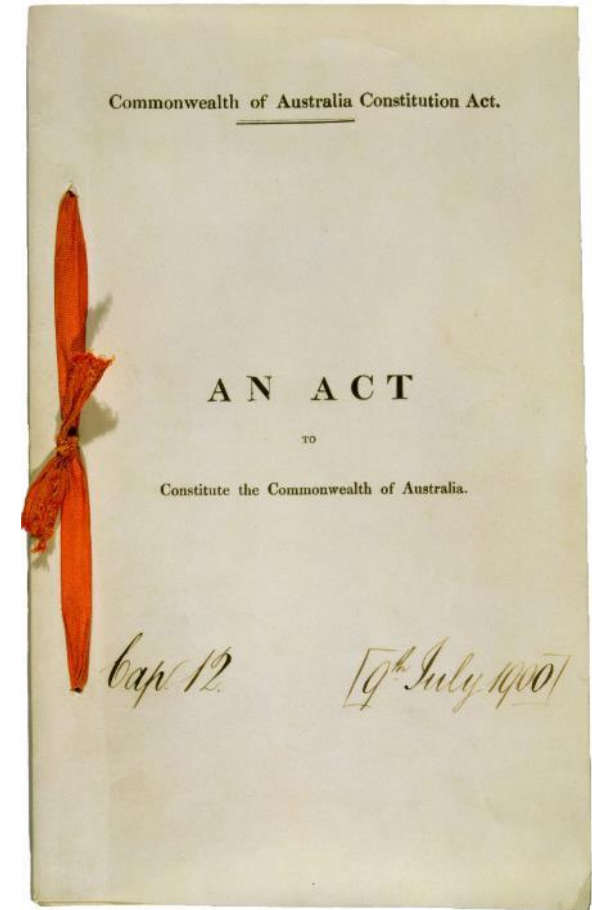
## Public Funding (2020 Average \$A)

- Government \$15,515
- Catholic schools \$13,614
- Christian schools \$13,038



# Legal Framework for religious freedom ...

- No constitutional protections for religious freedom
- No 'Bill of Rights' (some limited state law)
- Signatory to ICCPR etc but limited domestic application
- 'Equality' protected by broad anti-discrimination laws (exemptions 'protect' freedoms)
- 'Sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' protected, some protection for religion (personal)



# Social context ...

- 'Christians' less than 50% in Australian Census 2021
- Royal Commission Child Sex Abuse 2017
- Same-Sex 'Marriage' Legalised 2017
- Genders (not sex) on passports 2013
- Self-ID on Birth Certificates (various)
- Aggressive bans on 'conversion practices' in some jurisdictions



# The story being told ...

- Horrific **mental health outcomes** for LGBT youth
- **Discrimination** is the major cause of adverse mental health outcomes
- Anything less than '**affirmation**' is discrimination
- Religious belief is a **significant cause** of discrimination
- Religious belief is therefore **harmful**
- **Action must be taken** against schools [and churches and increasingly parents] who harm their children

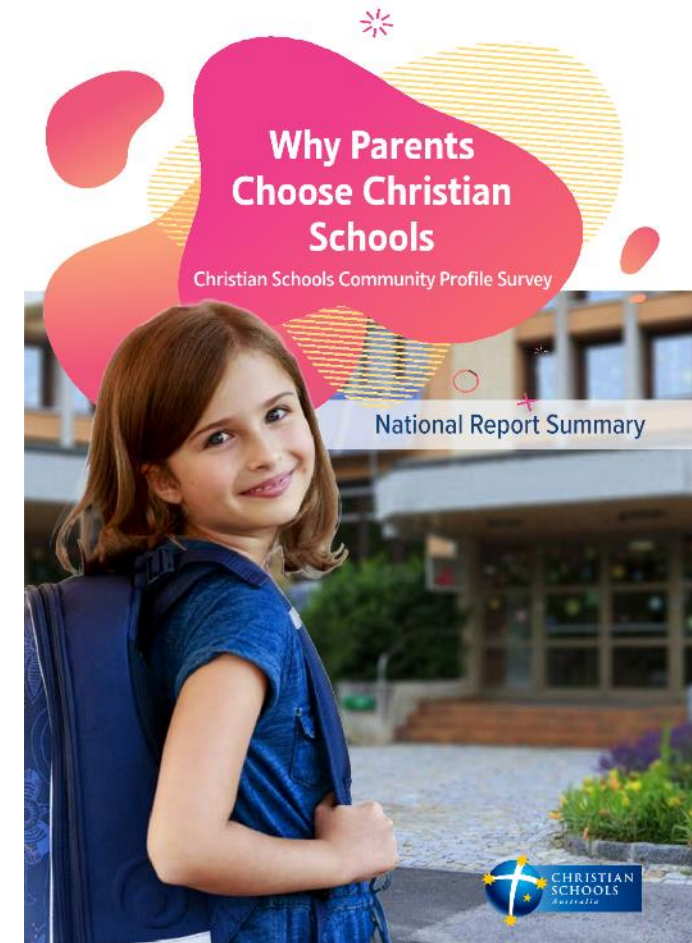
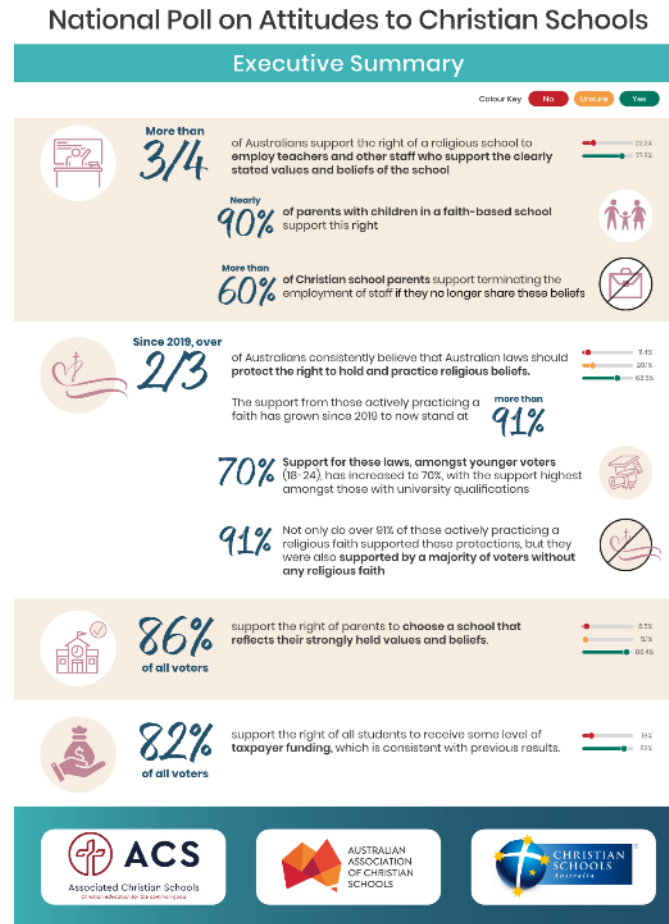
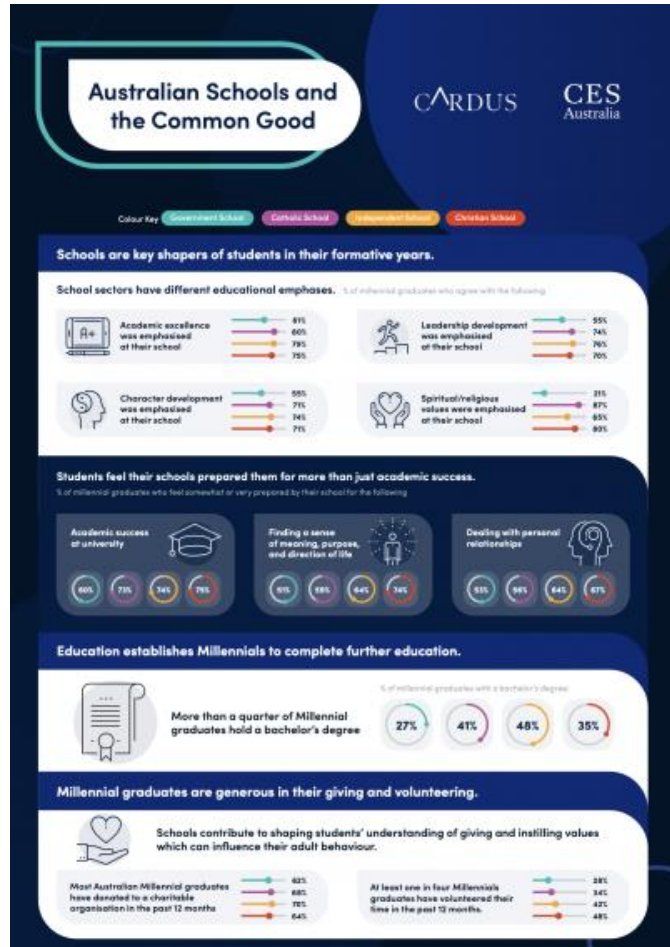
## Within our communities ...

- Parents actively choose our schools for **values**
- Many parents are **not committed** to the beliefs
- Parents expect **schools to resolve** any conflict around beliefs
- Enrolment **intakes at secondary level** are increasing
- **Activism** amongst senior years students is small but increasing
- **Younger staff** may not be as committed to traditional orthodox beliefs

## Building 'community of faith' ...

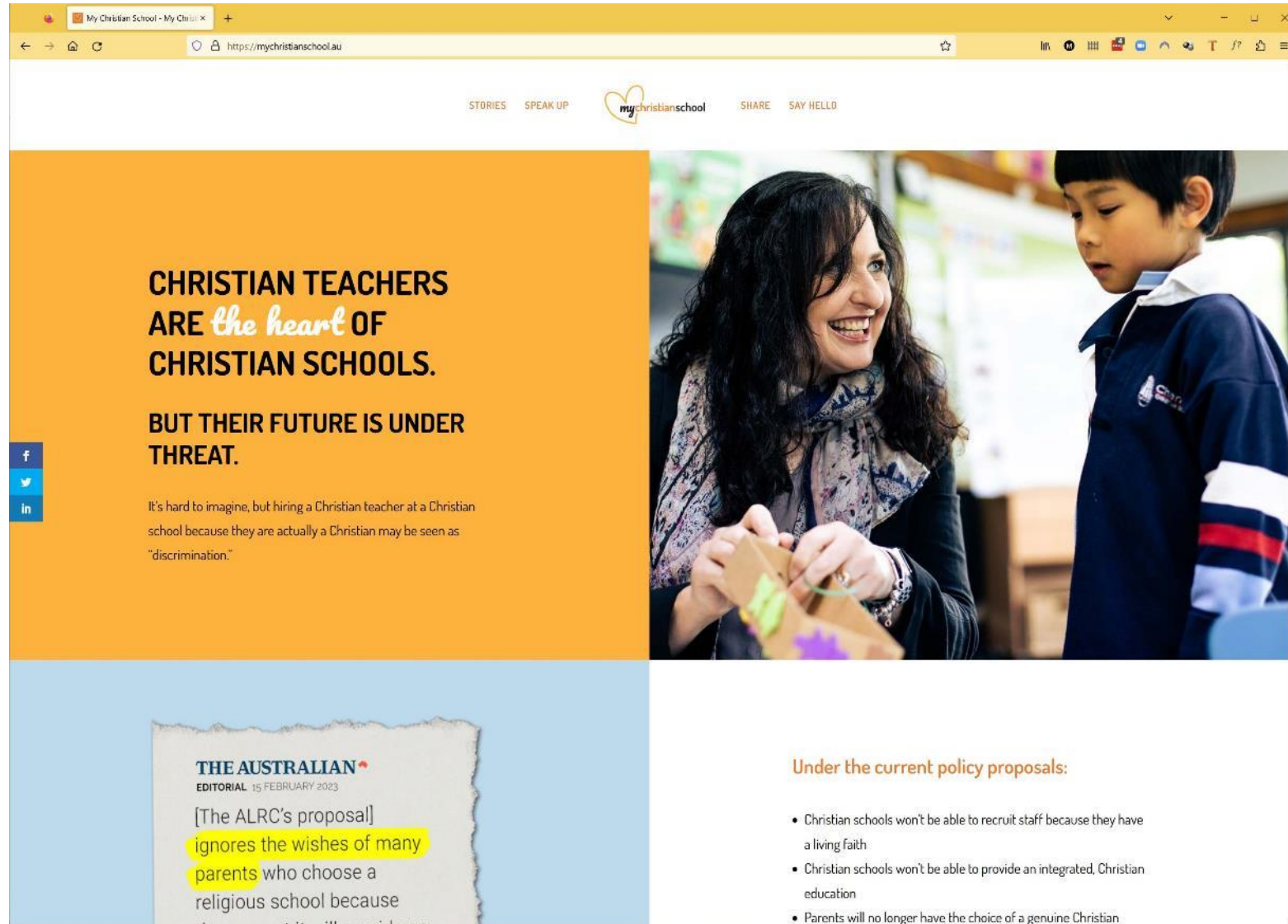
- **Encompassing** statements of doctrines and beliefs
- Employment documentation encompassing **ministry** nature of roles (contracts, role descriptions)
- Enrolment documentation requiring **acknowledgement** of doctrines and beliefs
- Educational outcomes **encompassing faith** and character elements
- Marketing materials reflecting **religious nature**

# Evidence Supporting Our Story





# Introducing - mychristianschool.au



My Christian School - My Christ... x  
https://mychristianschool.au


STORIES SPEAK UP mychristianschool SHARE SAY HELLO

## CHRISTIAN TEACHERS ARE *the heart* OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

### BUT THEIR FUTURE IS UNDER THREAT.

It's hard to imagine, but hiring a Christian teacher at a Christian school because they are actually a Christian may be seen as "discrimination."

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**THE AUSTRALIAN**  
EDITORIAL 15 FEBRUARY 2023

[The ALRC's proposal] ignores the wishes of many parents who choose a religious school because

**Under the current policy proposals:**

- Christian schools won't be able to recruit staff because they have a living faith
- Christian schools won't be able to provide an integrated, Christian education
- Parents will no longer have the choice of a genuine Christian



**School Name** (Required)

**Your Story** (Required)

Please add a few words about your positive experience...

**Your Name** (Required)

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the 'Message Your MP' page. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'https://mychristianschool.au/message-your-mp/'. The page features a navigation bar with 'STORIES', 'SPEAK UP', and 'SHARE SAY HELLO' options. The main content area has a light blue background with the heading 'MESSAGE YOUR MP' and a sub-heading 'If you value the contribution of Christian staff and teachers, this is your opportunity to have your voice heard.' Below this is a paragraph: 'Complete this form and your message will be shared with your local Member of Parliament (MP). We will also supply your MP's phone number, with a detailed prompt, if you wish to call and share your concerns.' To the right of the text is a photograph of a woman and two young girls. Below the main text is a section titled 'You are welcome to use these sample words with additions to make it your own, or you can start from scratch. Either way, please be respectful.' This is followed by a form titled 'Show your support for Christian schools' with the instruction 'Use this form to send a short message to your local MP.' The form includes a dropdown menu for 'Select your prefix', a text field for 'First & Last Name', text fields for 'Email' and 'Phone', text fields for 'Address', 'Town or Suburb', and 'Postcode', and an orange 'Next' button. At the bottom of the form, there is a small logo for 'Powered by DREAMWORKS'.

**MESSAGE YOUR MP**

If you value the contribution of Christian staff and teachers, this is your opportunity to have *your voice* heard.

Complete this form and your message will be shared with your local Member of Parliament (MP). We will also supply your MP's phone number, with a detailed prompt, if you wish to call and share your concerns.

You are welcome to use these sample words with additions to make it your own, or you can start from scratch. Either way, please be respectful.

**Show your support for Christian schools**

Use this form to send a short message to your local MP.

Select your prefix

First & Last Name

Email Phone

Address Town or Suburb Postcode

Next

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We need to be telling our story to ...

- **staff**, who should be our greatest advocates
- **parents**, already inclined to support us, but needing further language and encouragement
- **students**, the next wave of advocates
- **MPs and community leaders**, key decision makers
- **the media**, attempting to overcome the enormous religious illiteracy

# Any Questions?

**FURTHER QUESTIONS:**

contact me via email: [mspencer@csa.edu.au](mailto:mspencer@csa.edu.au)

