



Petition

Registration No.	22
Title	Protect religious freedom and parental rights in the NT
Presented on	22 November 2022
Presented by	Member for Nelson
Referred to	Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; and Public Accounts Committee
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	22 November 2022
Response due	28 March 2023
Response received	9 February 2023
Response presented	14 February 2023

Petition

Protect religious freedom and parental rights in the NT!

The Northern Territory Government has introduced a Bill into the Legislative Assembly that will deprive Territorians of their fundamental human rights under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These changes will:

1. Remove protections for religious schools to maintain their religious character by:
 preferencing people of the same religion in employment;
 preferencing families of the same religion in enrolment;
 preferencing people of the same religion in accommodation services;
2. Prohibit 'offensive conduct' that may include preaching and the reading of Scripture in public places, including in churches, mosques, temples and schools;
3. Require religious organisations to implement policies directly contradictory to their religious beliefs;
4. Allow 'representative complaints' to be made against religious organisations by groups hostile to religion and religious beliefs.

We, the residents of the Northern Territory, express our deep concern at this legislation and implore the Legislative Assembly to vote against, or amend, clauses 9, 11, 15, 17, 18 and 27 of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2022.

Response

The Petition was signed by 2190 people representing concerned Territorians. It was presented to the Legislative Assembly by Mr Gerard Maley MLA, Member for Nelson. I note that the subject matters in the Petition were considered in the Legislative Assembly through the course of debate and subsequent passage of the Bill on the same day as the Petition was read in the Legislative Assembly. Of the matters raised in the Petition, it is noted that there was extensive consultation on the proposals to reform the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* over many years in the lead up to the Bill being considered in the Legislative Assembly.

Consequently, stakeholders were afforded the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Bill through the consultation process, with the Bill introduced being based on feedback of stakeholders across the Northern Territory. The Bill was then subject to due process through the Legislative Assembly, with vigorous debate, prior to passage of the Bill and subsequent enactment of the *Anti-Discrimination Amendment Act 2022* (Act No. 22 of 2022).

I thank the petitioners for expressing their views, and the Member for Nelson for bringing this petition to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.