

Wednesday 2 October 2019

## **Joint Rainbow Families Submission to the Religious Freedom Reform Bills**

This joint statement has been prepared by Rainbow Families NSW, Rainbow Families Victoria and Rainbow Families Queensland in response to the following package of legislative reforms on religious freedom:

- Religious Discrimination Bill 2019
- Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019
- Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Freedom of Religion) Bill 2019.

We will refer to the above as ‘the Bills’.

### **We do not support the Bills in their current form as presented in the Exposure Drafts.**

Our general concerns with the Exposure Drafts are detailed below. In crafting our response, we have considered the Bills through the lens of ensuring our children’s rights and best interests. Our primary concern remains that our children are not discriminated against, treated unfairly, subjected to offensive or hurtful remarks or refused access to education, employment or health care because of who is in their family or how their family was formed. Given these considerations, we are unable to support the Bills as they stand.

At a minimum we recommend the following changes to the Religious Discrimination Bill 2019 (‘the RD Bill’):

- Clause 8(3)-(6) are removed entirely.
- In Clause 10(1) the term “may reasonably regarded” be changed to “conforms with” or “is in regard to”.
- Clause 41 is removed entirely.
- A “person” is defined as a natural person.

Further we recommend that the federal government consider:

1. Creating a Gender Identity, Sexuality and Intersex Status Commissioner or an LGBTIQ+ equivalent as part of the Australian Human Rights Commission.
2. Removing of the existing exemptions in the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act that allow students and staff to be discriminated against in faith-based schools because of their sexual orientation, gender identify or relationship status.

We do support providing protection from discrimination for people of faith, including people of no faith, in the form of a Religious Discrimination Bill as we acknowledge that many minority faith communities are often faced with discrimination and vilification and should be protected. We would welcome a bill that offers protection to those who need it but not one that allows individuals or organisations the ability to discriminate against people, including our children and our rainbow families.

However, because the proposed RD Bill has so many unorthodox and deeply troubling elements, we are unable to support its passage through parliament.

## INTRODUCING OUR RAINBOW FAMILIES

Rainbow families are families where one or more parent or carers are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse, non-binary, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ+) – and our children and families.

Our rainbow families live, work and play in every area of public life. We are parents and carers. Some of us are legally married, many of us live in de-facto or domestic partnerships. We are multi-cultural, of diverse races and multi-faith. We live in rural and regional communities and in metro areas. We work in schools, some of us are foster carers, or sole parents or living in blended families. Some of us have disabilities, some of us are neuro-diverse and many of us have children who live with disabilities. Importantly, we want our children to grow up in communities that love and cherish them and some of these communities are also our faith and religious communities. We are as diverse as every other Australian family.

Because of our diversity there are endless possibilities of where discriminatory comments could impact our access to health care, education, good or services in our day to day lives.

We respectfully remind you that:

1. Our children who should not, and should never be, discriminated against because of who they are, how they were created or what kind of family they come from, a family with sole parents, divorced parents and from a rainbow family where one or more parents or carers is LGBTIQ+.
  2. Any health service of any description receiving government funding should not be allowed to discriminate based on a person's sexuality, gender diversity, family structure or relationship status.
  3. Any educational institution of any description receiving government funding should not be allowed to discriminate based on a person's sexuality, gender diversity, family structure or relationship status.
- As lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, transgender or gender diverse, non-binary community members and/or as intersex people, we should not be discriminated against based on our sex, gender identity, sexuality, relationship status including polyamorous relationships, or marital status.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES

Rainbow Families NSW, Queensland and Victoria conducted an online survey of community members over a one-week period in late September. We collected 53 unique responses to a range of questions assessing our community concerns.

Of the 53 total respondents, 28 respondents were from NSW, 16 from Queensland and 8 from Victoria with one not indicating a state.

Most families were of no religion, but some indicated that they were Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Christian, Buddhist and Hindu. Others were raised Jewish, Catholic or Anglican, or attended faith-based schools but were no longer practicing. Others work in Christian schools or send their children to faith-based schools including Adventist and Anglican schools. Some people described themselves as spiritual but not religious. Others attended religious services on special occasions only.

Our community members shared with us their experiences of either themselves or their rainbow family being subjected to discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments, in general, in receiving goods and services, in workplaces and in health care settings.

Respondents reported that discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments were made to them and their family in a wide range of places: at work including when applying for a job, when accessing early childhood education and care, in an education setting, at the shops, seeking accommodation and on social media. Accessing medical services including hospitals, GPs and community health were of specific concern to our community, and many respondents had experienced services that were not inclusive, misunderstood the particular needs of the family or outright discriminatory comments.

Very few people, only ten respondents in total, reported making a complaint or giving formal feedback when discriminatory comments were made. The responses ranged from taking legal or police action (*Sought legal advice and advised the practice that they had discriminated against the person, No one listened and took approximately 16 months for police to assist me after multiple complaint*), making a verbal or written complaint (*Provided a verbal complaint and were told that we could use the comment box at the front desk, Made a complaint to management and they had a word to the person, Written complaint to the head of the child care*) to “demanded a refund and went elsewhere” and complaints that were dismissed or ignored (*The complaint was dismissed, That hospital ignored my complaint completely, Work ignored (the complaint) and (I was) bullied more*).

Only one respondent stated that when they made a complaint it was resolved satisfactorily.

Based on our collective experiences, and the responses we received to our community survey, most people will not necessarily enforce their rights if they feel discriminated against by a health service provider.

While we have grave reservations about this, and many other aspects of the Exposure Drafts, we particularly wish to focus on Clause 8, Clause 10 and Clause 41:

### **CONCERNS WITH CLAUSE 8**

We recommend that Clauses 8(3)-(6) of the RD Bill be removed entirely.

Clause 8(6) of the RD Bill allows health practitioners to challenge health practitioner conduct rules on the ground they amount to indirect discrimination. This clause elevates the religious beliefs of health practitioners over the rights of patients to obtain medical treatment.

The test of ‘unjustifiable adverse impact’ is unclear in its scope but appears to be a high threshold. The explanatory memorandum provides an example that the death or serious injury of a patient would “generally” amount to unjustifiable adverse impact. Adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ patients and their families would clearly not meet this very high bar. It appears to be unlikely it will cover the mental health and social implications of exclusion and marginalisation that results from the types of discriminatory practices we regularly face.

We are very concerned that the proposed Clause 8 will, in practice, allow the personal religious views of an individual health professional to be prioritised over the health care needs of our children or ourselves as their parents or carers.

Clause 8 will undoubtedly:

- Make it harder for rainbow families to access the health care we or our family members require;
- Create unnecessary fear about accessing health services or asking for appropriate health care;
- Create concern amongst prospective LGBTIQ+ parents about talking about their sex, sexuality and gender when planning their family with a health care professional; and
- May result in people having to stay in unsafe or unsupportive health care settings due to lack of choice, funds, travel or opportunity to move to another service or because of age, disability or financial means.

As representatives of Rainbow Families in Victoria, Queensland and NSW, we are very concerned about the impact of the 'conscientious objection' provisions in Clause 8, specifically in relation to how these may relate to the access to health care for members of the LGBTIQ+ communities such as:

- Reproductive health in general including access to contraception.
- Assisted Reproductive Treatment and access to clinics
- Preparing for pregnancy and family planning
- Fertility testing
- Fertility preservation including for trans and gender diverse people
- Gamete donation including counselling and testing
- Sexual health information, including STI and HIV testing and treatment

We know that many rainbow families have been subjected to discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments about themselves, their family composition or their rainbow family. Respondents to our community survey on the bills shared some of their experiences within the health care system, and specifically with individual health care providers. These are their stories:

*"In our journey to our second child, we received a number of inappropriate comments that we viewed as microaggressions- specifically by healthcare providers who did not understand our family makeup. Healthcare providers would hand my female partner (who did not carry our children) brochures for dads and would make comments that "This will have to do because we don't have anything for your situation." At the hospital, she had to advocate for her place in the birthing room - and a number of healthcare providers tried to tell me that my "friend" will have to leave until the child's dad came. She was often dismissed during critical decision making periods and was not given notice by a number of healthcare providers."*

Two mum family with two kids under 3.

*"At both Prince of Wales Hospital and RPA we have been discriminated against by medical staff. My partner was not treated in the same way to that of a heterosexual couple whilst supporting me through my medical needs. In one instance my partner was not called post surgery and we faced an additional 4 hour delay in being discharged. "*

Same sex de-facto (couple) trying for a baby.

*"When we visited a fertility clinic early in our journey the nurse continually ignored me and only spoke to my partner. When I confronted her she told me that it wasn't about me and that my partner was the only one involved in treatment so I wasn't relevant"*

Two mum family with 2 kids under 3

*"Mis-gendering me and calling us both mums repeatedly after being corrected. This is confusing for our daughter who calls us mama and baba and my identity as non binary/trans masculine"*

Non binary parent and Cisgender lesbian partner, 2 year old daughter and trying for another

*"I've been told by doctors that they treat families and normal people, and that I should find a specialised doctor for my "gay STD" tests."*

Single gay father of 2 children under 5

*"A doctor questioned if my child could even be mine"*

Family of 2 mums. First child nearly two and twins expected in March.

*"I have been asked to wait outside as only the immediate family could be in the emergency department when I went with my son and then partner"*

Lesbian mum with one child

*"Aside from the ER doctor, many GPs have insisted I 'must have HIV' because I'm transgender, have told me I'm 'ruining' my body, have said I'm deluded and mentally ill, and implied that I'm a bad parent for transitioning. My son has been there for some of that."*

Transmasculine queer disabled single father of a 17-year-old son with multiple disabilities

*"The doctor in charge of my hospital care refused to gender me correctly and told me I'd be normal again once I'd had a "sex change"*

Transgender sole parent of a young child

*"Many occasions, at doctors, hospitals and the fertility clinic. For example, doctors at Queensland Health made a negative comment about our family unit in front of our child"*

Two mums with a four year old child and another on the way

*"Doctor told me that I didn't need to worry about fertility because I'm in a same sex relationship and I shouldn't have children "*

Two mums and a girl aged 4

*"It begins with the forms and the never ending heteronormative assumptions. Coming out was traumatic for me and my partner so coming out every time we have to deal with someone new is re-traumatising and exhausting. We often just ignore, juggle, deflect etc to avoid it. My partner is significantly younger than me so that causes all sorts of issues as well so its really just a can of worms that we try to avoid."*

Non bio Mum of an 11yo boy, shared care with ex, currently live in a de-facto same sex relationship, in process of fostering

*"My Obstetrician for my first child asked me at one of my appointments about how lesbians have sex and when he saw how uncomfortable I was, told me he was asking so he could tell his daughter if she ever asked. I made an official Hospital complaint and he was made to undertake relevant education."*

2 parent lesbian family. Two children: child in Kindergarten in 2020, baby almost 1

*"My GP was asking about my sexual history and when I told her I was in a relationship with a woman, she replied with disgust: "Oh so you are a homosexual". I do not feel like she took me seriously or gave me the proper medical care as a result".*

Two lesbian mums with one baby

*"When seeking STI screening had to justify the need for it to my doctor, who then responded with "couldn't you just not?"*

Two (divorced) bi/pan parents of 3 grown kids. Father identifies as agender and now live with non-binary/pan partner and mostly lesbian housemate.

**As demonstrated by the above responses, members of our community already experience discrimination in service delivery. We are concerned that enabling health practitioners and others to practice discriminatory treatment under the cover of religious belief will serve to legitimise and entrench such behaviour.**

#### **CONCERNS WITH CLAUSE 10**

We recommend that Clause 10 of the RD Bill be removed, or at the minimum in clause 10(1) the term “may reasonably regarded” is changed to “conforms with” or “is in regard to”.

We are concerned about the term “may reasonably be regarded” in clause 10 (and in the definition of “statement of belief”) as being in relation to the tenets of the religion is extremely broad. As noted above, many of our families are also people of faith. We do not support how broad the operation of this clause is providing an exemption to allow schools and service providers to discriminate against those of other faith traditions.

The wording ‘may reasonably be regarded’ as opposed to ‘conforms to’ is a broader protection than other religious exemptions such as section 37 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth). No rationale has been provided for this change.

We do not want to see a situation where a new Bilsl make it harder for LGBTIQ+ young people to be their true authentic selves, for parents and carers to care for our children and for people with a real passion for education to do their job without fear. Currently if our children are at a faith-based school that support them and their family we worry that we are just one new Principal or one new School Board member away from the exemptions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) being exercised. This situation is unsustainable for our children and our families.

As one of our community members put it *“Our laws need to ensure that all people are included and respected and have equal rights – having the 'right' to discriminate against and exclude people on the basis of their gender or sexuality is not a 'right', it is prejudice, and prejudice and discrimination against some of us actually harms all of us.”*

#### **CONCERNS WITH CLAUSE 41**

We recommend that Clause 41 of the RD Bill is removed entirely.

The primary concern of Rainbow Families across NSW, Queensland and Victoria is that clause 41 of the RD Bill erodes existing federal, state and territory protections against discrimination. Religious freedom should not be achieved at the cost of harming the rights of others.

Like many other LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups, we are deeply concerned about the impact of this clause on our workplaces being able to provide safe and inclusive workplaces for ourselves as workers, for other staff from rainbow families or with family members from the LGBTIQ+ communities. Likewise, it may make it difficult for our children’s schools to ensure the conduct of their teachers in promoting diversity and including our families.

We are very worried that this clause will, in practice, prioritise people with religious views over others and could allow for an increase in the discrimination already faced by many LGBTIQ+ community members as well as women, minority faith communities and people with disabilities.

Comments alone, in the absence of other conduct, have been accepted in some circumstances as being “less favourable treatment” for direct discrimination. Comments that are homophobic, biphobic or transphobic comments not directed at the person in question may have previously been indirectly discriminatory. For example, a comment in the lunchroom that trans people are disgusting, in the presence of a trans person, would fall under this category.

Whilst clause 41(b) contains a limitation to the carve out from state and federal discrimination laws, we consider that overriding current discrimination protections to any extent is not only unnecessary but will cause demonstrable harm to our families. We believe this will be highly detrimental to our community for two reasons:

1. It will actively encourage people with extreme views to speak out against our families; and
2. It will prevent or deter our communities from making discrimination complaints about directly or indirectly discriminatory comments.

The majority of harmful and offensive statements made to us and our children do not meet the high threshold of “malicious” or likely to “harass” or “vilify”. The word “malicious” contains the additional hurdle to prove intent and “harass” has the additional hurdle to provide proof of ongoing statements by the speaker. Current discrimination laws do not require a person who has been discriminated against to prove ill intent and a person’s motive behind their words or conduct is generally irrelevant. Rather, it is the unfavourable treatment compared with others (for direct discrimination) or the disproportionately harmful treatment (for indirect discrimination) that we must prove in order to establish a discrimination claim.

Discrimination against our families may not always be overt and is sometimes done under the guise of “*good intentions*”. It might be the doctor, who says that he cannot in good conscience refer us for fertility services as he believes that we should not have children. It might be the Grade 2 teacher who tells our child’s class that in her view children should have both a mother and a father. If clause 41 is implemented, neither of these would be acts of discrimination as long as the person can say that they were speaking from a position of faith. Yet the impact on our community members is significant - our children receive the message that our families are not “real” families, or we are somehow “less than” others.

Even when discrimination is not malicious or amounts to ongoing harassment, it is nonetheless insidious and detrimental to the health and wellbeing of our families. Sometimes the seemingly small events, when repeated constantly, can add up to a lot of harm and cause distress, including to our children.

As noted above, a statement of belief in clause 41 must only be one that “may reasonably be regarded” as being in relation to the doctrine of a religious faith. While the explanatory notes seem to indicate an intention to cover the traditional religions - Judaism, Islam, Christianity etc there is no reason that it will not cover very obscure belief sets. Many white supremacist organisations have Christian underpinnings. They may feel particularly empowered in the name of faith to say racist, homophobic and transphobic things if the Bills are passed, and must only point to their ethos to justify their harmful statements.

Examples from our community survey of comments made about their families include:

- A trans male father of a 17yr old son with multiple disabilities had experienced several traumatic and troubling events, including:
  - his son's school bus driver had told him and his teenage son that both of them would burn in hell because he is trans.
  - he had a service provider for his son tell him that children need both a mother and a father and that being gay is a sin.
- At a day care, a woman from a two-mum family of 2 under 5 reports having been asked "who is the real mum?" and subjected to comments such as "you are not a real family", and "you will be judged by God". When she complained to the head of the child care they blamed the persons' English language skills and personal beliefs for the treatment.
- During the postal survey (2017), a teacher from a two-mum family was lectured by the Headmaster in the staff room about the school's stance of being opposed to marriage equality. The woman left in tears. The woman said her son was also very negatively impacted during the plebiscite, feeling that his family was being targeted.
- A child protection worker who shares care of her 11year old boy with her ex-partner and is in the process of fostering, described the many comments that are made in her workplace about her family. She is often asked who is the boy's "real mum", and asked intrusive questions about her son's sperm donor.
- A family of two mums and one son experienced comments in a local Facebook community group about how families like them are wrong, disgusting and should be shot.

**In most of the above cases it was impossible for our families to know whether or not the speaker was making statement because they are a person of faith. However, what would prevent a person from making a discriminatory comment and then retrospectively defending it on the basis of their beliefs?**

#### **LEGAL PERSON DEFINITION**

We recommend that a person is defined in the RD Bill as a natural person.

A "person" as defined in the RD Bill explicitly includes a religious body. That could create absurd results with a religious body being able to complain about a company, a company against a religious body, a religious body could even complain against an individual.

Human rights are for individuals not religious bodies or corporations.

#### **SUPPORTING TASMANIAN RAINBOW FAMILIES**

While not officially representing Tasmanian rainbow families, we acknowledge that many LGBTIQ+ community members who live in Tasmania are very concerned about impact of the Bills.

According to Equality Tasmania, the Religious Discrimination Bill undermine the legal rights of LGBTIQ Tasmanians in three ways:



- a) *Weakening section 17(1) of the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act allowing LGBTIQ Tasmanians and others to be humiliated, intimidated, insulted or ridiculed in the name of religion*
- b) *Making it harder for big companies to promote inclusive workplaces by allowing employees to make demeaning statements against other employees in the name of religion*
- c) *Making it harder for LGBTIQ Tasmanians to seek safely seek health care by allowing health care professionals to refuse us service in the name of religion.*

*([https://www.equal.org.au/equality\\_tasmania\\_religious\\_discrimination\\_fact\\_sheets](https://www.equal.org.au/equality_tasmania_religious_discrimination_fact_sheets))*

## **SUPPORTING OUR INTERSEX PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

We acknowledge we are not best placed to comment on the specific impacts on intersex people and strongly endorse the submissions from Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA).

## **IMPACT OF STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION ON OUR FAMILIES**

As parents and carers we are acutely aware of the impact of stigma and discrimination based on people's attitudes and values around diverse families has on our children. The postal survey, held over almost three months in late 2017, provided some people with a licence to discuss and debate our worth as parents and carers. This exposed our children to hate speech and offensive and hurtful comments. We have seen this extended debate on religious freedom do the same. These Bills will not address our children's rights to be protected from *discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments*.

In preparing for our collective response to the consultation on the proposed religious freedom reforms we asked our community to respond to two questions. The aim of these questions was to a) collate real examples of the impact of discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments on children from rainbow families and b) to collect examples of what parents and carers could foresee as the likely impact of these Bills on their children and rainbow families into the future (should the Bills as they stand be passed).

- a) *If you have been subjected to discriminatory, inappropriate, offensive or hurtful comments how did it impact on your children personally ( eg: did they overhear a hurtful comment and ask about it) or did a comment impact on your decision about which service to take your child to, for example.*

Parents and families have had to deal with:

- Understanding that such comments are sadly part of being in a rainbow family in modern Australia:
  - *We discuss this constantly and understand that it's part of our life as a rainbow family.*
  - *We have done a lot of research and only go to gay friendly doctors. Our child has not heard hateful comments.*
  - *Unsure as we have always shielded her from the most objectionable comments whilst also keeping an open dialogue about our family.*
- Children who have become upset:
  - *After continued teasing, my child became withdrawn and stopped wanting to socialise with other children. My child expressed hurt and confusion about being different to other families.*

- *My kids have overheard more shit then most adults have had to cop. I have had to explain derogatory and hurtful names and comments to a 5 year old who should never have heard it said*
  - *We have explained that some people are rude*
  - **Changing health care providers or avoiding services where there may be a negative comment or experience:**
    - *We will not be attending the same healthcare facilities for our next child.*
    - *I avoid all such places*
  - **Personal adverse impact on parents and carers:**
    - *It risked impacting significantly on our attachment and my feelings of worth as a new mum which was already at risk due to 5 years of infertility treatment.*
    - *I was angry and hurt. My son is too young to notice.*
    - *(I felt) Embarrassed, upset, uncomfortable*
  - **Fears for the future as children grow older and begin to understand comments:**
    - *My child is just a baby but I do worry about how this will impact them in the future when they hear comments like these when they are older. The government needs to do more to protect us.*
    - *Thankfully this hasn't happened - but I fear this often...*
    - *Too young to understand at this time. However, if similar comments are made in the future I can imagine it would be quite upsetting.*
    - *My daughter noticed that she was excluded and bullied but I lied about the reason in order to protect her. I didn't want her to be ashamed or worried about her gender transition. My other children also noticed we were excluded and worried.*
- b) *If service providers, teachers and school staff, and co-workers are able to state their personal, faith-based beliefs about you/your family without this being considered discrimination, how will this impact on you/your rainbow family?*

*Disastrous. Only thing stopping them is being called out on. They are already discriminatory whenever they can without being overt about it. This will allow them to be openly disparaging about families. How will it impact chilled as they grow up thinking they are less than others. Our children have done nothing wrong.*

2 dads with 3 kids aged 2.5  
Victoria

*Everyone is entitled to their beliefs and their faith but the manner in which they express those views is most important. I would expect that as I treat all with respect so too should I be expected to be treated with respect.*

Two men and one 13 year old girl  
NSW

*How do you think being told I'm a disgusting abomination will impact on me? I already have no legal recourse when I complain about bigots and at best they're moved to a different part of the same company. There is no need for INCREASED protections for bigots. Being religious is a choice, being trans is not. There is no evidence for the existence of any god, let alone the version bigots worship, and there is definite evidence for the existence of transgender people and the harm done to us and our families by the 'personal beliefs' of bigots.*

Transmasculine queer disabled single father of a 17-year-old son with multiple disabilities  
Victoria

*I am not sure. I am afraid for my daughter in the future.*

Closeted bisexual parent in a heterosexual relationship. Two children under 10. The eldest has recently identified as same sex attracted.  
Queensland.

*I believe that my family and I would have been discriminated against more than we have been.*

Single mum of three (I identify as as bisexual) and one of my children is transgender  
Queensland.

*I cannot begin to fathom how negatively this will impact on me and my family - honestly, it's just too scary. I cannot believe we're in the position we're in. These Bills will wind-back hard-won LGBTIQ+ legal protections and I hate to think about the serious negative impact they will have in every facet of our lives... It is seriously keeping me up at night... (It's almost midnight and here I am, writing to you, after posting and sharing and drafting submissions etc etc....) What kind of unfair, unjust world is our 2 year old growing up in? It unnerves me to even begin to think about this...*

Two mum family and have a 2 yr old child.  
NSW

*I may never come out at work! I'm already very hesitant to based on generally dismissive statements made by some co-workers.*

We are a mum and dad family with 3 adult kids but I, and one of my children are Queer.  
Queensland

*I will be in fear. I won't disclose to child's school, work, services. Risk to going stealth is damaging, frightening and powerful to those that know. Scary scary world to live in. Possibly move to another country.*

2 mums and 13 year old child  
Victoria

*I would have to choose between allowing my child to be bullied in schooling environments or cutting down my child's social experiences by limiting them to home schooling/rainbow friendly communities only.*

Transgender sole parent of a young child

*I wouldn't feel it appropriate that my children be cared for by them if they are able to explicitly state their negative views about our family.*

2 parent lesbian family. Two children: 1 in Kindergarten in 2020 and the baby is almost 1.  
NSW

*If people are able to make discriminatory comments about my family, and these comments are protected by the law, these will have a severely negative impact on the mental health of our family. This may lead to health issues that will place a strain on the public health system. It is also not constructive for society to have this vocalized hate, as it leaves us feeling worthless and disillusioned with society.*

Two lesbian mums with one baby  
NSW

*Immensely. I work for a Church organisation, my son goes to a religious school. This would have a really serious and negative impact on us.*

Non bio Mum of an 11yo boy, shared care with ex,  
in de-facto relationship, in process of fostering  
NSW

*Immensely. This will affect my daughters schooling and for her own opinion of her value in society being lesser than others. We are bringing her up to respect people from all backgrounds so she can live in a multi faith, multicultural society*

Two lesbian parents of one child  
Queensland

*It could potentially be very harmful to our young influential son, who is finding his place in the world and needs to be accepted and included by his peers, their families, the community and his teachers. I would be horrified and incredibly sad to learn that he was being judged, discriminated against, isolated and hurt because he has 2 mums.*

Two mum family of one 4yo boy  
Queensland

*It is up them to be accepting as well. I have no problem with them, so they shouldn't have a problem with me.*

I am a gay man with an accepting family.  
NSW

*It will be like hate speech. People will be able to try and convert me and tell my child that their family is wrong, they are wrong and should not have been conceived It risks running deep.*

We are a two mum family. Both identify as lesbian. One child aged 3 years.  
Together for 11 years.  
Queensland

*It will encourage comments from people with negative views about our families who would usually keep their opinions to themselves.*

Two mums and a girl aged 4  
Queensland

*It will further influence poor cultural understanding across a generation where it should be changing. It directly impacts us in a negative manner as our children won't have acceptance or realise that it is perfectly normal and ok to come from a family with same sex parents. It will impact on my child mostly and make him feel less than other children.*

We are a two mum family and have two children, 7 and 8 years old.  
NSW

*It will make us feel inferior, like we don't belong, like there is something wrong with us. We have come so far and the religious freedom bill is a BIG step backwards.*

We are a married 2 mum family of a child under 3 and another on the way  
NSW

*It would be open to hurt and discrimination; it is none of their business.*

Two bi-sexual mums, one 28 year old daughter of one of the mums  
NSW

*My kid's psychological health will be destroyed. My value and worth as a human being will be ripped down in form of my kid's eyes without a single leg of defence for me to stand on.*

Single gay father of 2 children under 5  
Queensland

*Significantly! People should have freedom of thought - they can think what they want - but should not be able to express their views when they are hurtful and discriminatory. If these protections are removed it will have a serious impact on our children and community. So negatively, so, so negatively. I am a teacher, we are taught and regularly reminded how important modelling good behaviour is to our students. If people are given the freedom to discriminate, due to their beliefs, how will we eradicate discrimination? Their actions will model to our future leaders that it is okay to discriminate upon differences.*

Two mum family with 2 children (9 and 6 yrs). Kids donor/dad is known and involved.  
NSW

*They are discriminating based on an aspect of our life that doesn't alter how we should be treated or how we treat others.*

Two mums and a 1 yo son.  
Victoria

*This could affect the mental health of all of my family members, as well as self-esteem and feelings of safety and belonging in our community and society.*

Two mum family with a 3.5year old and another baby due early next year.  
NSW

*This public demeaning will significantly affect two children directly, one who is trans, one who is non-binary.*

Married polyamorous bi, total of 5 adults (MFMFM), 5 kids ranging from 6-17.  
Queensland

*This will have a huge negative impact on my child's values and family worth. It will absolutely contradict everything that we have taught.*

Two Mums, 1 x 4 year old and one on the way  
NSW

*This would be extremely detrimental to our family. It would say to our children that they are not normal and that their family is not normal. This leads to kids feeling disconnected and that they don't belong. A lack of connectedness and belonging are major risk factors for mental health problems. We should be working to create more connected and accepting communities to protect all of our children.*

Two mum family with three kids all aged under three.  
Queensland

*This would make me feel unsafe and would isolate my children. Imagine if the teachers could say this, what would that tell other children... how is this any different from racism or gender discrimination?? Also from a work this would. Be unprofessional conduct.*

Two mums with 2 children under 5.  
NSW

*Very negatively. I work in private healthcare and my job is already tenuous. My older child has severe behavioural problems and requires lots of specialist attention and input from a large team of educators - this would be jeopardised.*

Pansexual cis woman with 3 & 7 year old sons.  
Queensland

*We are already a bit stealth in those environments because there is never time to explain my pronouns or anything and people assume we are a cis straight couple.*

Nonbinary parent living with a male partner and their toddler.  
NSW

*Will erode your confidence with either yourself and or family members e.g. children. Make yourself feel like a second class citizen again.*

Two mum family with one boy aged 9 and one girl aged 2 years.  
NSW

#### **QUESTIONS AND THANK YOU**

We have a question about whether health services will be required to promote the fact they have staff who will use their ability to consciously object to deliver a service to some clients. How will our rainbow families know which services are suitable, which individual practitioners who do not approve of our families? Further to this - how will existing LGBTIQ+ friendly services be able to recruit for culturally competent and safe practitioners?

We thank you for the opportunity to be consulted on these Exposure Drafts and for the opportunity to provide you with our submission. We also acknowledge the work of other LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups who have submitted to this consultation, including Intersex Human Rights Australia, Equality Australia, ACON, Equality Tasmania and others, and ask that you also consider their submissions in complement to ours.

Representatives from all three organisations are available to respond to any further queries or questions you may have, either online or in person:

Rainbow Families Qld  
[Rainbow.families.qld@outlook.com](mailto:Rainbow.families.qld@outlook.com)

Heather Corkhill

Rainbow Families Victoria  
[rainbowfamiliescouncil@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowfamiliescouncil@gmail.com)

Felicity Marlowe

Rainbow Families NSW  
[info@rainbowfamilies.com.au](mailto:info@rainbowfamilies.com.au)

Justine Field & Cathy Brown

Thank you for considering our submissions.