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**Attorney-General**

# Media Release

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## **Bill Shorten holds onto Labor's own discrimination against gay students**

Anyone concerned that exemptions to discrimination against gay students will remain in the Sex Discrimination Act over the Parliamentary break should be in no doubt about who is now responsible – Bill Shorten.

It was Bill Shorten's Labor Party that put these specific exemptions into the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) in 2013.

Now Labor says they agree with the Government that Labor's 2013 exemptions which allowed for discrimination against gay students should go.

Labor also says agrees with the Government that faith-based schools should be able to educate students consistent with their beliefs and the tenets of their religion.

But Labor is not prepared to accept the common sense principle that religious schools should be able to impose reasonable school rules evenly on all of their students, such as a requirement that all students – regardless of gender – attend chapel. These rules are no different to those imposed in many workplaces.

And worst of all Bill Shorten will not agree to the common sense process of allowing a conscience vote of all members to allow these common sense changes to happen right now.

In stark contrast, our Government has repeatedly offered ways to ensure children don't face discrimination, and protect religious freedoms.

The Government's proposals simply mean that any action against a school, in a court or the Human Rights Commission, would be decided after consideration of the reasonableness of the rule in the context of the institution's religion and whether there was regard for the best interests of the student.

Religious leaders and schools have warned Bill Shorten there is a risk that Labor's current approach would limit faith-based teaching beyond the classroom and extend into churches, synagogues, mosques and temples.

Bill Shorten should be ashamed, and anyone concerned about these exemptions need look no further than to the fact that the Labor party which put them there in the first place will not allow a conscience vote to have them removed.