

Religious Freedoms Review

Case studies provided by Kate Foord from Drummond Street Services

Bullying of a gender diverse young person in a faith based School

“An example here: a gender diverse young person attending a faith-based school was bullied over a sustained period, so badly that they stopped attending school for a period of 18 months. The school determined that the young person was a school refuser who had mental health issues, therefore avoiding dealing with the bullying. It is important to note, here, that this issue of bullying in schools affects more than LGBTIQ young people. The most common form of bullying, whether you are queer or not, is in relation to sexuality and gender: ‘You faggot’ does not need to be based on the ‘fact’ of someone’s sexuality; nor does ‘you’re such a girl, a cissy’ need to be based on the ‘fact’ of someone’s gender.”

Faith based family service providers unable to help

“We have clients who have been denied a service even with the family law system and the specialised family violence system, where a lesbian couple, who have separated, sought support from faith-based relationship counselling support after having some significant conflict issues and seeking relationship counselling and parenting support, and they have actively been told, ‘we don’t have anyone that can help you with those issues.’ This includes two cases where family violence was present, where an adult victim was seeking support for themselves and their children who were also victims of family violence from the adult partner. In both those cases, no mandatory reporting occurred in relation to child protection issues, and the victim was turned away and left on their own.”

“...even with the family relationship cases, if people *are* given service, say in the context of family violence the violence is minimised or misrecognised, with appalling outcomes for children and adults, which forces them to stay in violent relationships or leave with no support,”

Discrimination in aged care

“Another example is in aged care. An elderly gay couple, where one of the partners had Alzheimers and they were seeking high dependency support from an aged care provider. The sister originally sought assistance and was told there were vacancies. All three attended the interview offered, during which they explained this was a gay couple, and they were told that there were no beds.

LGBTI elders know that, if they are seeking to access aged care, to *not* say that you’re a gay couple, and then even if they do get in, *because* they don’t say anything, they are then forced to hide their relationship, and get additional legal protections. This is a couple who will not marry, for obvious reasons, and while the Marriage Act would protect people legally if they do get married, there is still the

possibility that the aged care providers will say there is no bed because the people are gay or lesbian.”

Difficulty in regional and rural areas

“The LGBTIQ community is clearly a marginalised and vulnerable community brought about by discrimination, and they often don’t have choices about where to go to seek those services, particularly in rural and regional areas where the faith-based organisation may be the *only* organisation that provides that services. Being told, we can’t help you, we don’t have anyone here who knows your issues, means that they have no choice and no service, with devastating long-term health and well-being impacts.”