**SAMPLE LETTER TO OPPOSITION MPs - PARENTS**

[Date]

[MP name]
[MP address or email]

Dear [salutation]

As a parent I have made a deliberate choice to send my child[/ren] to [insert name of school].

A crucial aspect of my choice is that Christian values and beliefs are modelled and taught at the school.

These are the values and beliefs that I model at home, and I want them to be foundational to their school education. I also believe these values are important for the wellbeing of our community, state and nation.

As a parent, it is important to me that school is able to employ staff in keeping with this mission. I have chosen faith-based education and I expect the school to be able to make the best choices it can to deliver that outcome.

I believe a faith-based school needs to be able to make decisions on the basis of religious belief, without the threat of Government or State intervention. This goes to the heart of religious freedom.

If it is passed, the Government’s *Equal Opportunity Amendment (Religious Exceptions) Bill 2016* will have the effect of placing restrictions on the way the school can choose its staff. I see this as a restriction on my right to choose the most appropriate school for my family. **As a matter of principle, this is an erosion of my freedom to choose a faith-based education for my family.**

The Attorney-General has said that the changes are necessary to protect the human rights of job seekers. As a family, we also have human rights, including the right to freedom of religion, and the right to have our children educated at a school that reflects our beliefs.

With respect, there are many schools that can provide non faith-based employment. There are fewer schools that can meet the desire of parents for a faith-based education, and if the Government’s changes are passed, even these schools may become increasingly secularised.

I know that in a democracy these human rights issues need to be balanced. I believe the law as it presently stands (with an exception which allows religious schools to make staffing decisions in keeping with their faith) is already effective in providing that balance. It is consistent with Commonwealth law and the equivalent law in other states and territories.

In fact, the exception that now applies is exactly that recommended by a bi-partisan Parliamentary Committee established by the previous Labor Government which undertook extensive research and public consultation, receiving in excess of 1,600 submissions. Put simply, the current form of the exception is basic common sense and consistent with independent recommendations.

**As my local Member of Parliament I implore you to oppose the Bill and ensure that the current, sensible, balance is maintained**.

Please act to uphold the right of our family, and other similar constituents, to choose an education in keeping with our faith.

Religious freedom is not only important for those people of faith. It is a highly significant principle of human rights and should not be lightly tampered with.

Yours faithfully