

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

*Statement*

**HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan)** [9.55 pm]: I rise to speak briefly on a very important matter relating to religious freedom in Western Australia. Members may be familiar with the case of wedding photographer Jason Tey, who was recently hauled in front of the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission after he agreed to photograph the children of a same-sex couple but disclosed a conflict of belief in case the couple felt more comfortable hiring somebody else.

Mr Tey did not refuse service. He offered to do the job. He simply stated his traditional Christian belief. The conciliation conference failed and he now finds himself on the wrong side of the WA State Administrative Tribunal. According to recent media reports, it was demanded at the conciliation hearing that Mr Tey provide an admission of discrimination, as well as a written apology to be published publicly on the homepage of his website and all social media pages associated with his photography business for at least two months. Those unreasonable demands should be called out for what they were—that is, a crude attempt to publicly bully, shame and punish Mr Tey. No sensible person could accept such malicious attacks on their character and livelihood.

For those who care about religious freedoms, the Tey case is extremely disturbing. Politicians in this place constantly preach about tolerance, yet here in WA a Christian man is being harassed for expressing his beliefs. Worse, this harassment is being sanctioned and financially supported by the state. State anti-discrimination laws are being used to coerce Christians into doing things against their will for fear of persecution. In Mr Tey's case, he did not even decline service, yet he was still the subject of a complaint.

Australia is historically a Christian society, but today many Christians are suffering from the reality or fear of vilification. We have seen how Christianity and its crucial role in shaping Australian society have been virtually expunged from the education curriculum. We have seen how high-profile Christian campaigners in Western Australia, such as Mrs Margaret Court, have been attacked and smeared for expressing their beliefs. Mrs Court was forced from her position as patron of John Forrest Secondary College's specialist tennis program for daring to publicly support the traditionalist view of marriage. The Minister for Education and Training supported the actions of the school board in effectively firing Mrs Court for her beliefs. In other words, the education minister condoned a policy of excluding committed Christians from school sporting academies.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** I did not!

**Hon CHARLES SMITH:** According to media reports, that is so.

Several members interjected.

**Hon CHARLES SMITH:** That is what was reported in the media.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon CHARLES SMITH:** I cannot imagine that Sir John Forrest would have supported the anti-traditionalist values now espoused by the school that carries his name.

*House adjourned at 9.59 pm*

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