

Media Statement

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7 September 2018

Respect, Tolerance and Free Speech should be universal

The claims being made against the Baptist Union of Queensland and the Carinity CEO in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission are without foundation. Queensland Baptists is steadfastly defending this action.

The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland has already found there was no vilification or direct discrimination. We believe the claim of "indirect discrimination" is tenuous.

In our view, the CEO's email to staff was a simple communication of a position on a matter of public policy. It did not name any individuals and it was not a personal attack on anyone.

Indeed, the author urged greater tolerance for all views in the debate, and expressed a view that "both sides should be respectful of each other, but free to voice their views without being labelled as a hater".

The email sent in September 2017 was in the context of debate in which many CEOs openly expressed their views on the marriage debate – and actively encouraged their staff and customers to vote in a particular way. The actions of the CEO were no different to the actions of many other CEOs with much higher profiles. The only difference was his advocacy for a NO vote.

We think it should not be controversial that the CEO of a Christian organisation would espouse that organisation's long-held principles, in an internal communication to staff.

We fully support the right of people to express their views on this subject, in a respectful and tolerant environment. However that right, and that tolerance, should not be one sided. It must be universal.

We are confident that, after examining the full facts of this matter, the Commission will reject the claim that the comments in any way amounted to "indirect discrimination".

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