



BLUE MOUNTAINS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Blue Mountains Grammar School Ltd

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9th November, 2018

To the Blue Mountains Grammar School Community,

Late last week Joint Heads Mrs Megan Hastie and Mr Andrew Beitsch signed an Open Letter written by the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney which, in part, sought to retain exemptions in the Sex Discrimination Act that allow faith based schools to consider our values and Christian ethos when hiring staff. This letter has been widely interpreted to mean that Sydney Anglican schools want to use these exemptions to discriminate against staff and students on the basis of sexuality. Quite rightly, many members of our past and current school community have found this hurtful and offensive, and expressed their outrage that BMGS would act in this way. We completely agree.

To expel a student or dismiss a teacher because of their sexuality is unacceptable, and, as many of you have stated, such actions have no place at Blue Mountains Grammar School. To this end, we acknowledge that an error was made in supporting the retention of these exemptions and we apologise unreservedly for the hurt caused.

Blue Mountains Grammar School does not, and will not, discriminate against any member of our school community – staff, students or parents – on the basis of their sexuality. The LGBTI+ community are valued and welcome members of our school, and always will be. To treat them otherwise would be totally inconsistent with the school's ethos.

We deeply regret that we did not anticipate the way this letter would be interpreted and the hurt that it would cause members of our school and other Anglican schools across the Sydney Diocese. It grieves us that our support for the Open Letter has clearly led some people to believe that students, staff and families who identify with the LGBTI+ community may not be welcome at our school. This is not true.

There is no doubt that the events of the past week have damaged our school and we are deeply sorry. Many past and present students, staff and families have questioned the values of the school, and its future intentions. We are aware that the public discourse in which the school has become enveloped has also affected our talented and committed staff. We unreservedly apologise for the way supporting the letter has caused members of our school community to feel alienated or marginalised.

We value diversity, inclusion, tolerance and acceptance. The School's Christian ethos is founded on a commitment to love God and genuinely love our neighbours – a yardstick we have not met in this instance and for which we have been rightly criticised. Instead of hearing the welcoming call of Jesus' love, people have heard a shout of rejection, and this grieves us. Our ethos values equality and inclusion, a fact demonstrated by so many past and present members of our school saying sexual discrimination is not part of the BMGS they know.



For this reason, the School withdraws its support for the retention of the provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 as stated in the final portion of the Open Letter of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney.

There are lessons we can learn from this. We are committed to ensuring BMGS stays an inclusive community where staff and students can find their place and be respected and valued as individuals. We are committed to hiring the right staff to care for and educate your children. As a community we need to keep talking about what our school's Christian ethos is and what religious freedom means in modern Australia. It is vital that we take the time to ensure our actions and words cannot be misinterpreted. We will work together to heal the hurt and put to rest the anxiety that has been caused over the past week. As our school motto says Per Ardua Ad Altiora – through effort to higher achievement. We hope that by sharing this difficult road together we can gain a clearer sense of who we are as a school and celebrate both our faith foundation and our diverse community - a school that has a place for everyone.

Megan Hastie
Joint Acting Head

Andrew Beitsch
Joint Acting Head