



14 July 2023

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

RE: *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Amendment Bill 2023*

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Amendment Bill 2023* ('the Bill'). Our associations represent four independent Christian schools in the ACT educating over 2,700 students.

The Bill would require the ACT Government to conduct an inquiry into the *Health Infrastructure Enabling Act 2023* (ACT), under which the ACT Government compulsorily acquired the Calvary Hospital, Bruce, and to report before 30 June 2024.

We would welcome such an inquiry and urge the Commonwealth to ensure that the ACT Assembly fully investigates the Calvary Hospital takeover. Despite the ACT Government's assurances that religion was not a consideration in the takeover, there are widespread media reports suggesting the religious position of Calvary Hospital on the provision of contentious medical procedures, such as abortion and euthanasia, was a major factor in the Government's compulsory acquisition of the hospital.

The rushed passage of the Bill through the Assembly, with the suspension of the usual accountability mechanisms, have aggravated the fears and apprehensions of many people about the lack of respect for religious institutions and their autonomy across the ACT.

These concerns are shared by some people within our Christian school communities in the ACT and questions have been raised about the potential for future takeovers of other faith-based organisations, including religious schools. With schools and their communities involved in significant investments to expand and maintain school facilities these uncertainties are extremely unhelpful for our communities as they plan for future school needs.

While it may be that these concerns are unfounded, these matters cannot be left unresolved. The best means of addressing these concerns is through a thorough and transparent independent inquiry.

We support the establishment of such an inquiry.

Your faithfully

Vanessa Cheng
Executive Officer
Australian Association of Christian Schools

Mark Spencer
Director of ~~Public~~ Policy
Christian ~~Schools~~ Australia