



Michael Delaney  
Principal  
St Joseph's College

19 February 2019

Dear Michael

Kildare Ministries' Colleges and Community Works, building on the centuries old traditions of the Brigidine and Presentation Sisters, continues to welcome, care for and educate people from a diversity of backgrounds. Within this context, the Trustees have recently become concerned about media stories in relation to the Ruddock Report on Religious Freedom.

As you may be aware, this Report was commissioned in the wake of the discussion of LGBTQ+ issues. The report, yet to be tabled in Parliament, made 20 recommendations, 15 of which have been accepted by the Government with the remaining 5 subject to consultation with States and Territories. Recommendations under review are 1 and 5-to-8. These recommendations specifically refer to religious schools and staff and students within them.

Recent political discussions, and media reports have tended to present all faith-based schools as adhering to similar discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ+ students and staff. The five recommendations under review, suggest a lack of congruence between faith practices and how various religions view LGBTQ+ issues. Some media reports have linked the expulsion or exclusion of students and staff on religious grounds.

Within the context of this considerable social and political debate on Religious Freedom we write to assure you that we do not support discrimination against students and/or staff on gender, LGBTQ+ or religious grounds. In our Colleges, we already welcome people from diverse faith backgrounds and LGBTQ+ people and as Trustees, we believe it is part of the Mission to build thriving, respectful, tolerant and inclusive communities. Indeed, we promote the notion of 'come and see' to potential enrolees and invite them to be in our communities and experience how we live as Christians in the Catholic tradition.

It is important that members of our community hear this message loudly and with conviction. We would be concerned if there was any doubt, that as members of faith communities, our people felt anything other than respect and a sense of belonging and worth.

We intend to write to various politicians and to some of our Bishops to reiterate our position and as Trustees we look forward to our ministries continuing to develop as inclusive and welcoming communities, especially in this year of *hospitality*.

Yours faithfully

Maree Marsh csb  
Trustee Co-Chair

Rosemary Copeland  
Trustee Co-Chair