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## Media release

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### **Nine out of ten disagree with Cardinal Pell on the right to expel gay students**

A Newspoll survey commissioned by The Australia Institute shows that 89 per cent of Australians do not believe that private schools should be able to expel children because they are homosexual.

A report released yesterday by the Institute details the wide range of exemptions from anti-discrimination legislation allowed to private schools, including the ability to exclude children on the basis of their sexuality or pregnancy.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, has defended the right of religious schools to discriminate, arguing that it is integral to religious freedom.

“Our report shows that at present the ‘right’ of religious schools to discriminate against students is being placed ahead of the right of all Australian children to a comprehensive education in a safe environment”, said Dr Clive Hamilton, Executive Director of The Australia Institute.

“The issue is not about religious freedom, it is about protecting vulnerable students from intolerance and vilification. While most private schools are to be applauded for promoting tolerance and respect, there are a number of documented cases in which gay students and pregnant girls have been pressured to leave private schools.”

The Institute’s report, *Public Attitudes to Discrimination in Private Schools*, shows that parents with children at private schools are just as likely to be opposed to discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and pregnancy as parents with children at public schools.

“Earlier this year the Prime Minister said that public schools are values-free. Our analysis shows that the law actually allows private schools to repudiate the values of tolerance, respect for difference and compassion, values enshrined in anti-discrimination legislation, enforced in public schools and almost universally supported by Australians”, said Dr Hamilton.

*The Institute’s report can be read under What’s New on its website - [www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au).*

**Please note the Institute’s new telephone number - 02 6125 1270.**

**[www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au)**