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The Experiences of LGBT+ Workers Employed in Religiously Affiliated Organisations in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Australia has a particularly contentious legislative climate around religious freedom and LGBT+ rights. While some states of Australia protect LGBT+ workers from discriminatory actions, other states do not. This means the experiences of LGBT+ workers vary widely depending on the legislation in place in their state or territory, and that some religiously affiliated employers in Australia can explicitly discriminate against LGBT+ employees (Rees, Rice, Allen 2018). These disparities in legislative protections are acutely manifested in the experiences of LGBT+ workers. To this point, there has been little attention given to the experiences of LGBT+ workers specifically employed by religiously affiliated organisations. This paper presents the analysis of interview data with LGBT+ people employed in religiously affiliated organisations from across Australia. The project was the first major research to examine these issues in an Australian context. The interview data demonstrates profoundly harmful experiences of discrimination impacting LGBT+ workers when laws enable discrimination against these employees. Furthermore, these laws have a profound impact not only on LGBT+ workers, but also their co-workers, and their religiously affiliated employers in social welfare, education, and health care. The paper concludes by identifying strategies to scaffold better protections for LGBT+ workers employed by religiously affiliated organisations to better manage LGBT+ rights in these workplaces.

Keywords: employees, experiences, LGBT+, religious-affiliated organisations, workers