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LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR FREEDOMS OF CONSCIENCE AND BELIEF

A new YouGov Galaxy opinion survey shows that Australians strongly support the need for legal protections for freedoms of thought, conscience and belief (including religious belief) and that support has risen sharply in the last two years.

75% of those surveyed agreed that freedom of thought, conscience and belief in public through speech, practice and teaching needed to be protected. Only 5% disagreed and 20% were undecided.

Support has risen from the 62% who agreed to a similar question in a Newspoll in August 2017.

The YouGov Galaxy Poll asked about 8 freedoms, and found majority support for protecting each of them.

These included protection for the:








































































- Freedoms of people to express and practise and teach their children their conscientious and religious beliefs without penalties or adverse action, including on issues where opinions differ such as man-woman marriage, sexual activity and gender fluidity (support ranging from 54% to 75%).
- Freedoms of faith-based schools to continue to maintain their identity in their teaching, by employing staff who share their beliefs and by otherwise setting standards of conduct consistent with their religious ethos (58% support, 16% against, 26% undecided).

Voters aligned with each of the major parties expressed strong support for the need to protect freedoms.

On the question “Do you agree or disagree that each of these freedoms should be protected in Australia: Allowing freedom of thought, conscience and belief in public through speech, practice and teaching?” Coalition voters: 80% agreed, 3% disagreed, 16% uncommitted. ALP voters: 74% agreed, 6% disagreed, 20% uncommitted.

The survey was conducted over 7-10 May. The sample comprises 1,033 respondents, distributed throughout Australia including both capital city and non-capital city areas.

Do you agree or disagree that each of these freedoms should be protected in Australia?

	YES	NO	Undecided												
Allowing all people the freedom to express thought, conscience and belief	75%	5%	20%												
Allowing faith-based charities, businesses and individuals to operate according to religious beliefs	61%	14%	25%												
Allowing parents the right to choose in relation to sex education	63%	15%	22%												
Allowing faith-based schools to operate and employ staff according to their religious ethos	58%	16%	26%												
Allowing people to express their objection to homosexual activity	59%	20%	21%												
Allowing people to express the view that gender is not fluid and is based on the biological sexes of male and female	54%	15%	31%												
Allowing people to express the view that marriage is between a man and a woman	66%	15%	19%												
Allowing churches and ministers the right to decline to conduct a same-sex marriage ceremonies	57%	21%	22%												

The survey results are published at the Institute for Civil Society (www.i4cs.com.au).

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