

iGlobal Law : 2022 Annual Update : Australia

Legal Change	Effective Date	Action required
<p>Religious Discrimination Bill 2021</p> <p>This Bill will make discrimination on the ground of religious belief or activity unlawful in specified areas of public life, including in relation to employment, education, access to premises and the provision of goods, services and accommodation. Similar protections against discrimination already exist in the cases of race, sex, disability and age at the Commonwealth Level.</p> <p>The Bill also establishes general and specific exceptions to the prohibition of religious discrimination; provides that certain statements of belief do not constitute discrimination for the purposes of certain specified Commonwealth, state or territory anti-discrimination laws and creates offences in relation to victimisation and discriminatory advertisements.</p> <p>Among other things, the Bill also creates the office of the Religious Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commissioner (the Commissioner). The Commissioner is intended to play a role in educating and engaging with the public about issues regarding freedom of religion.</p>	<p>No date has been set yet. The Bill has been referred to various parliamentary inquiries and is expected to be debated again when Parliament resumes on February 8th 2022.</p>	<p>No action currently required. Employers should monitor the passage of the Bill and if passed assess any impact on their organisation.</p>
<p>Public Health Orders in relation to measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19</p> <p>All Australian States and Territories have made Orders/Regulations under public health legislation to reduce the impact of COVID-19, placing requirements on employers in relation to their workplaces and employees. This includes mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for employees working onsite in particular industries and sectors.</p> <p>Employers and employees must comply with any Public Health Orders or Directions that apply to them, otherwise significant penalties apply.</p>	<p>Public Health Orders are currently in place in each State and Territory on a temporary basis.</p>	<p>Employers and employees should familiarise themselves with current Public Health Orders or Directions, and any future changes, including in relation to mandatory vaccination requirements in the states or territories in which they operate.</p>