

Controversial archbishop and Pauline Hanson have come out in support of Israel Folau

Politician Pauline Hanson has called for all Australians to support Israel Folau over a “precedent” which will be set if he’s to lose his case.

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One of Australia’s most senior Anglican leaders says Israel Folau’s right to express his faith is being denied, claiming the former Wallaby star’s treatment “smacks of a new and ugly Australia”.

Archbishop of Sydney Dr Glenn Davies says Folau’s right to express his faith and act according to his conscience is of “fundamental importance in any democracy”.

“It is of great concern to many Australians that this right is being denied and vilified,” Archbishop Davies said in a statement on Tuesday.

Folau has been trying to build up a \$3 million war chest from public donations to fund his legal battle against Rugby Australia, which terminated his \$4 million contract in May.

The decision by RA came after Folau posted a biblical passage on social media saying “drunks, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, fornicators, thieves, atheists and idolaters” would go to hell unless they repented.

Folau said he had been the victim of discrimination on religious grounds and set up a GoFundMe page, which raised more than \$750,000 in about four days. But GoFundMe shut it down on Monday because it breached its terms of service and said it would issue refunds to the more than 7000 donors.

A fresh fundraising effort was launched on Tuesday morning by the Australian Christian Lobby, which by lunchtime had received more than \$640,000.

Archbishop Davies says while there are deeply held views on both sides of the issue, “at the moment, only one side is being heard”.



Israel Folau preaching at his Sydney church. *Source: Facebook*

“The way in which Folau’s motives have been impugned and his avenues of support have been cut off smacks of a new and ugly Australia where dissent from narrow cultural views is not tolerated,” he said.

Folau’s original post came from a place of “deep conscience and concern” and not malice, the archbishop said.

“It had nothing to do with rugby and it should have been his right as a citizen to speak of what he believes without threat to his employment.”

The clear support of ordinary Christians has been “ignored, marginalised and silenced”, the archbishop says.

“Loud, intolerant voices swamp the quiet faith of many.”

The archbishop said he prays the situation may shine a light on freedom of speech, freedom of worship and freedom to live according to faith.

Along with the archbishop, politician Pauline Hanson also came out in defiant support of Folau and likened his battle to her own when she had to fight back after being “called a racist”.

“I support Israel I really do over this because, whether it’s GoFundMe which has shut him down which I think that’s wrong in itself as well, he is actually standing up to them and good on him because I’ve had to stand up to them over the years because I was called a racist and they tried to shut me down,” Hanson said.



Pauline Hanson supports Israel Folau. *Source: AAP*

“A precedent is going to be set here, I hope he takes them on and I hope that he does prove to be right in what he’s saying that he has a right to have his own thoughts and say what he wants to say.

“We are grown up enough to actually decipher it for ourselves and not have other people telling us how we should react to this.

“It’s a tough battle, I support him fully and I hope he keeps going and if you want to fund him I hope he puts up a trust through a lawyers office or I’m quite willing to help in any way that I possibly can because its just not about him, forget about him selling his property or houses, this is going to set a precedent for all Australians so think about that and you better get behind him and support him because they’re trying to shut us down as much as they possibly can.”

The archbishop has previous created headlines when he issued a public apology for the “distress” caused by a letter signed by the heads of Anglican schools calling on the government to defend religious freedoms.



Archbishop Glenn Davies speaks at an Anglican school celebration. *Source: News Corp Australia*

The letter from 2018 called for the preservation of laws that allowed schools to discriminate against gay students and teachers.

Dr Davies said he was “deeply sorry” when the story broke in November.

It comes after GoFundMe defended its decision to remove Folau’s cause from its site on Monday.

“After a routine period of evaluation, we have concluded that this campaign violates our terms of service,” the company’s regional manager in Australia Nicola Britton said in a statement on Monday.

Britton said GoFundMe was committed to the “fight for equality” for LGBTIQ+ people and fostering an environment of inclusivity.

“While we welcome GoFundMe’s engaging in diverse civil debate, we do not tolerate the promotion of discrimination or exclusion,” she said.

“In the days since Mr Folau’s campaign launched, more than one million dollars have been donated to hundreds of other campaigns, large and small, across Australia. Those acts of kindness are the heart of GoFundMe.

“Our platform exists to help people help others.”

— with AAP

<https://www.news.com.au/sport/sports-life/controversial-archbishop-hits-out-at-new-and-ugly-australia-over-folau-campaign/news-story/ba24f7f9f8ab3b485faab59ad4885ce7>