

MEDIA RELEASE

Israel Folau to pursue right to freedom of religion

Rugby star files Fair Work Commission dispute against Rugby Australia and the NSW Waratahs

MELBOURNE, Thursday, June 6: Israel Folau's legal representatives have today confirmed applications have been filed with the Fair Work Commission to deal with Mr Folau's unlawful termination dispute.

The applications were filed against both Rugby Australia Ltd and Waratahs Rugby Pty Ltd confirming the rugby star's intent to seek a declaration that his employment was unlawfully terminated because of his religion. Under section 772 of the Fair Work Act it is unlawful to terminate employment on the basis of religion.

Mr Folau said he felt his treatment by Rugby Australia and the Waratahs had left him no choice but to stand up for his beliefs and the rights of all Australians.

"I will forever be grateful and proud to have played the sport I love for our nation. Ours is an amazing country built on important principles, including freedom of religion. A nation made up of so many different faiths and cultural backgrounds will never be truly rich unless this freedom applies to all of us," he said.

"The messages of support we have received over these difficult few weeks have made me realise there are many Australians who feel their fundamental rights are being steadily eroded.

"No Australian of any faith should be fired for practising their religion," Mr Folau concluded.

According to the applications submitted today, the termination of Mr Folau's employment contract prevented him from playing at the peak of his career and on the cusp of a Rugby World Cup, which would have likely generated even greater exposure and opportunities.

Accordingly, Mr Folau is seeking substantial remedies from his former employers should they be found to have breached the Fair Work Act in terminating his employment.

The announcement comes after it was recently confirmed Mr Folau had engaged national commercial law firm Macpherson Kelley and prominent industrial relations barrister Stuart Wood AM QC to act for him in his dispute with Rugby Australia and the Waratahs.

The rugby star sought counsel after Rugby Australia and the Waratahs terminated his contract on the basis that he breached their code of conduct by sharing a message from the bible on social media.

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