

I am writing in response to the Productivity Commission Draft Report which recommends the removal of tax restrictions for donations made to religious charities in support of SRE and for the removal of existing tax deductibility for gifts to school building funds.

A pleasing clause is that the report recognises the invaluable contribution of philanthropy in Australia and that it signals the government's desire to double philanthropy by 2030. However, the fact that the report intends that SRE and private school funding for buildings be removed is very concerning.

Due to the current crisis in Education reported by the NSW Education Minister, Prue Carr, that almost 10,000 lessons are uncovered in NSW schools each week, one would have thought that the report would be encouraging and supporting SRE in NSW government schools.

It is a fact that SRE in Australia is the largest year round volunteer army, which provides close to 10,000 lessons per week, by 10,000 scripture teachers in NSW, of which 2,000 are in the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

Another piece of compelling evidence shows that:

- 1) SRE delivers key psychological benefits to children;
- 2) SRE promotes thick multiculturalism and social acceptance;
- 3) SRE reduces the risk of student radicalisation.

It should be noted, as well, that evidence shows people of faith are 25% more likely than their secular counterparts, to donate money and 23% more likely to volunteer of their time.

On a personal note, as a volunteer scripture teacher (SRE) and a regularly worshipper at my church, my faith drives both my giving habits in regard to my money and the use of my time.

I know that many churches utilise a Religious Instruction in Schools tax deductible fund for a portion of their offertories, which is important to me as well.

Since retiring from a teaching career, I have for the past 33 years taught scripture in government schools in my area, and this year of 2024 will once again be covering 8 classes a week, in 5 different government schools. I do this because I value very much and am passionate about what I do, as I see and know the contribution SRE makes to young lives, as well as to our Australian society.

Therefore, I strongly give my support for the maintenance of DGR Status for SRE and the School Building Fund AND I also would love to see the government recognise the value that the faith communities make to our Australian Society.