

OFFICIAL

6th February 2024.

I write to raise concerns around the possible removal of the deductible gift recipient (DGR) status for religious education.

I am the Treasurer of Wollondilly Schools Ministry Board and I know the negative impact the removal of the DGR would have on our viability to employ a paid SRE teacher for our local High School.

1. SRE provides values education which stresses family and community, offering an alternative to the individualism present in society today.
2. SRE provides opportunities for religious identity to be reinforced which is particularly important for minority religions.
3. Educational experts place on health and wellbeing – it has long been acknowledged spirituality is an important aspect of identity and the inclusion of SRE in schools allows for a sense of belonging to be encouraged as students gain a greater understanding of their own identity.
4. Religious education provides opportunities for understanding of other cultures and their practices and beliefs to be incorporated into the school community. This also promotes acceptance of multiculturalism, fostering positive attitudes towards others and their beliefs. This minimises opportunities for religious extremism to cultivate.
5. One quarter of Australian society reports having been subjected to discrimination due to their religious beliefs. SRE was found to provide opportunities for students to develop strategies that help them respond to negativity they experience due to their beliefs. This is particularly important as Australian society becomes increasingly diverse. It has been clearly demonstrated in the media negative attitudes towards Jews, Christians and Muslims are all too common.

Given the benefits SRE is found to provide, it seems like sporting organisations, religious education provides a range of important benefits, not least of which is improving mental health and wellbeing which, as you are no doubt aware, is critical in light of the current rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicide and poor peer relationships.

The philanthropic goals of the Productivity Commission's draft report aim to increase the number of volunteers and double the amount of giving by 2030. It seems the decision to remove the charitable giving status of organisations providing religious education would be counterproductive to the intended goal.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. Jaan Lang.