

## **Submission on *Future foundations for giving* draft report**

This submission is to address some recommendations presented in the draft report on philanthropy in Australia, namely the DGR status of Special Religious Education in government schools and building funds in religious schools.

My own Christian faith drives me to both give financially to charitable organisations, and volunteer my time in support of them. Out of a desire to follow Jesus' command to love my neighbour, charities provide a wonderful opportunity. The great contribution of especially Christian charities to this nation cannot be missed. Without Christian charities, and other faith-based organisations, the social welfare in Australia would crumble. The DGR status of these organisations helps me give money in a tax efficient way, which is fitting considering the amount of money the government saves because of the work these religious organisations do. I also volunteer my time as an SRE teacher in my public school.

This contribution includes services provided in Special Religious Education in public schools, and the education provided by religious schools.

SRE in government schools is beneficial to wider Australian society. Children are opted into these classes, and receive government approved education on their family's religion for the most part. Many are opted in with no particular religious emphasis from the family, but are instead being educated culturally in the multicultural heritage of this great country. Students in SRE are also equipped to form nuanced and robust worldviews in a way that is not catered for usually in classrooms. This all works together to benefit our society.

In a similar way, religious schools provide opportunities for families to receive education that broadens the worldview of young people. Many families, even with no religious practices, are opting into independent religious schools because of the high education standards and these broad views and opportunities that are available. The facilities built by these schools through building funds helps provide students with learning environments to become high contributing members of the Australian public.

The DGR status of both of these groups helps me give money towards them, and in turn give money to help further wider Australian society, saving the government money. For SRE in particular, the DGR status enables organisations to employ people to help coordinate and oversee these classes which are run by volunteers. Apparently SRE teachers make up the second highest number of volunteers in Australia, only being topped by surf life saving volunteers. To remove the DGR status of SRE would remove the capacity for charitable organisations to employ these overseers, and make volunteering as an SRE teacher far more difficult.

It is inconsistent that a report which is seeking to increase the philanthropy of Australians and see more people step into volunteer roles would remove the DGR status of these charities that enable, equip, train and manage the volunteers who contribute to the wider culture in such valuable ways.

Stuart Jansen.