

Jannali Board of Christian Education in State Schools

Submission Regarding the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Philanthropy

The Jannali Board was established in 1976 making it the oldest Board in NSW. Sharing our experience over this time (48 years) provides valuable insights into the value that SRE has provided to the school and broader community over this time and the valuable role its DGR status has played in fostering this work. In particular it highlights how SRE has had a significant influence on how students deal with each other and the school culture as a whole, improving the total education experience offered by the school contrary to the assumptions the report recommendations are based on.

The Board was established in 1976 through the efforts of churches from the 5 suburbs in the catchments for the two single sex high schools that existed at the time. Using its DGR status the Board was able to employ a teacher to work in the 2 high schools that were ultimately amalgamated into the coeducational *The Jannali High School*. Funding for the teacher has come mainly from private donations by parents and other interested members of the community, supplemented by donations from local churches. It has been a real community effort.

Over these 48 years SRE has journeyed as an integral part of the school Community as it has become TJHS, the trauma of students being killed in unfortunate events, the cycle of different principals and teachers who have all been supportive of SRE and the COVID period. Over this period of time 4 students have died in traumatic circumstances: AA from leukaemia in 1992, MM from a botched Pizza Hut robbery in 1994, LS who died when trapped in a house fire in the late 90s and AL in a boating accident in the Woronora River in 2010. A previous principal told a Board member after the death that "it's essential that every school is open to a voice of faith". The presence of SRE in the school was important during each of these occasions.

SRE played a critical role at TJHS during the cessation of classes during the COVID period. This obviously impacted the delivery of SRE but the Board, through the SRE teacher, was able to provide internet access for students (for lessons) who financially were unable to afford that access. The Board also provided food/living hampers to needy families nominated by the school. This highlights the full impact of SRE on students and the school community as a whole, which is not recognised in your report.

To summarise the very clear message that has been fed back to the Board is the difference that SRE has made to the school in improving student welfare, in reducing the level of violence in the school, in helping students deal with traumatic events and in helping students at an individual level.

SRE has done this helping students appreciate the spiritual world beyond themselves and how they might behave towards others and contribute to the school community. These are important educational values that equip students to become better citizens after school. They are not values that are taught or examined in the usual subjects.

Our concern is that removal of the DGR status for the community contributions that make SRE possible for the local community will severely weaken its long term viability, thus undermining its educational value, weakening the school culture and its contribution to overall community wellbeing. It seems as though the real charity value of SRE will be needlessly weakened by a doctrinaire misunderstanding of what it is and offers and that it has no flow on to the broader community. This contradicts the principles the review is meant to be based upon.

Therefore the Board urges that the recommendation to remove the DGR status for SRE be reviewed in light of the evidence of the charity values it has provided over a generation; the value for money it provides for community contributions and evaluation of what will be lost if such a radical policy change is implemented.

Board membership

Don Geering (Chair) Loftus Uniting Church

Naomi Kirk (Secretary) Jannali Anglican Church

Julian Musgrave (Treasurer) Jannali Anglican Church

Cameron Hyslop Jannali Anglican Church

Terry King Sutherland Reformed Church

Michael Jones Jannali Congregational Church

Jim Mobbs Como Community Church (Presbyterian)

Leonora Jones Sutherland Anglican Church (St Johns)

Key points you could consider including:

- A broad overview of how your faith drives your giving habits (money and time), and the value of tax deductibility (DGR status) for your financial contributions.
- Why you so value the contribution SRE makes to young lives and to Australian society.
- Your support for maintaining DGR status for SRE and school building funds, and how you want the Government to recognise and value the contribution faith communities make to Australian society.

The Draft Report recognises the invaluable contribution of philanthropy in Australia, and signals the government's desire to double philanthropic giving by 2030. However, the ONLY Deductible Gift Recipients (DGRs) the Draft Report recommends REMOVING are for SRE in public schools and private school building funds.

Religion is not a "private" matter. It is certainly a matter of personal conviction. But those personal religious convictions have "public" consequences. Religious convictions shape and are shaped by the relationships, families, and communities which religious people participate in.

'RIGS' (Religious Instruction in Government Schools) tax deductible fund for a portion of their offertories.

- SRE/CRI programs in government schools have proven student wellbeing benefits and contribute positively to the school community
- The intrinsic link between formative religious instruction in childhood years and religious service in adult years, and the community-wide benefits of this Christian service
- The removal of DGR status for giving to religious instruction in government schools will significantly impact organisations responsible for the delivery of quality SRE/CRI programs
- How the faith of donors is what primarily drives their giving (money and time) to religious instruction in government schools, not any private benefit received
- The value of tax deductibility for these financial contributions
- Your support for maintaining DGR status for giving to religious instruction in government schools
- Your desire for the Federal Government to recognise and value the positive contribution that faith communities make to Australian society in this policy decision
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was personally blessed by the first SRE Board that was established in NSW in 1976. At the time, the local churches in the Jannali Area got together and pooled their resources so that Jannali Boys' and Jannali Girls' High Schools could have SRE taught by the one, employed teacher. Fast forward to 1995, and I was a year 7 student at the then-amalgamated co-educational "**The** Jannali High School", and blessed with regular SRE from year 7-10 with termly seminars in senior high.