

Submission

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I am writing a submission regarding the Federal Productivity Commission Draft Report recommending the removal of tax deductions for donations made to religious charities in support of SRE. I have acted in the role of both SRE teacher and School Chaplain.

As a person who has benefitted from scripture teaching when I was in school and one who grew up to provide it for students as a volunteer later in life I am surprised this is actually a consideration.

Why? Because:

- Those who receive SRE benefit from having moral foundations to live life by that are not provided by teaching in other subjects. Scripture teaching is a deterrent against drug usage, domestic violence, sexual violence, alcoholism, racism, criminal activity to name a few. When I was in SRE classes I understood these harmful elements were to be avoided. Government loses billions of dollars yearly to these activities due to individuals participating in them.
- Those who receive SRE benefit and are grounded spiritually benefit from better mental health. Studies consistently show that people who have faith generally enjoy better mental stability*
- My conviction that SRE and Chaplaincy in schools are long-term beneficial factors for society motivates my financial giving to such endeavours. I am happy to give thousands of dollars to such work which enables volunteers to do this worthwhile work.
- There are a great number of charities in Australian society and the fact that they receive tax deductibility status enables me to give more liberally. SRE teaching should not be discriminated against but remain one of those receiving DGR status.
- If SRE does not receive this status I will most likely drop off giving to other charities including secular causes that I support now. This is because my budget-like anyone else's- is limited.
- People in religious communities such as churches or temples contribute to the wellbeing and betterment of society. Their faith foundations provide platforms for their engagement in charitable and philanthropic works.
- As a Christian, I don't need cute jingles on TV or expensive advertising campaigns to make me more socially aware. Responsibility to social work is a byproduct of my faith. It is second nature for millions like me in Australia. Where did that originally come from? For me it begun at Scripture classes at Ashfield Boys High School where I learned about the Beatitudes of Jesus. Soemone made those classes possible then and others are still doing it today.
- The government must surely want the benefits that faith and spirituality provide for our society. How would removing DRG status from SRE ultimately be a good thing? It will only mean that faith teaching and its positive benefits -as I clearly pointed out- would be removed slowly but surely. Maybe that is a comforting

thought to those who abhor religion (a decidedly small minority of Australians) but it is not fair, sensible, or reasonable.

- On a big picture level, this removal of DGR status for SRE clearly goes to the heart of whether religion is a good thing in society or not. Only ignorance would say it is a bad thing. For example, thanks to Christianity across the centuries we have:
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 - 1. Literacy and Public Education (Justin Martyr established religious schools in the second century which led to cathedral schools; Christians created the first school in the USA in 1600s, Martin Luther in the 1500s established the first equivalent of public education for all; John Strum, in the 1500s established graded education; Louis Braille in the 1830s established educations for the blind; here in NSW we have the Anglican Church to thank for the inception of public education)
 - 2. science (Isaac Newton- the father of science, a Christian; others who followed: Blaise Pascal; Henrietta Leavitt; Robert Boyle to name a few. In fact, 98% of the founders of the scientific revolution were Christians)**
 - 3. universities (the top ten universities in the world were founded by Christians- including Harvard, Stanford, Cambridge, Oxford, Princeton and Yale)***
 - 4. hospitals (earliest christian care centres recorded 400 AD this led to hospitals eventually across Europe) ****

* <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/01/31/religions-relationship-to-happiness-civic-engagement-and-health-around-the-world/>

** Francis Collins, *Why This Scientist Believes In God*, 2007

*** John S Dickerson, *Jesus Skeptic*, 2019

**** Guenter B Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals*, 1999