

Dear Commissioner

As a parent of four children who attended local government schools, I was concerned to read the draft report into the future of giving and see that there was a recommendation to remove the DGR status for religious education in state schools.

I think our public schools are great institutions and I am incredibly grateful for the excellent education and opportunities afforded to my children while attending. We are a Catholic family, we attend a local church, our children participate in Mass at the parish and have received their sacraments there. They are also students at the local school and more broadly members of the local community, through sport, employment and friendships.

Is it not possible that my children have access to an education system that fully supports and acknowledges their whole self? Without access to private education is there not the willingness or capacity in our government schools to include the broad identity of all our students through at least minimally making space for some inclusion of their faith? And the faith of their fellow students, who are Hindu, Muslim or Jewish or attending secular ethics? (I note there is no recommendation to remove the funding of SEE).

How will our society grow in tolerance if we only model secular world views as the acceptable path? Why would we seek funding models that build inequality and remove parental choice. Our schools are not the constructs of the government of the day, they are reflections of our communities and the students and the families who attend them. They should always seek inclusion and the roundest development of the students in their care.

My involvement in my children's school came as a direct result of volunteering for SRE classes. Through the invitation to become an SRE volunteer, I grew to know the school and the staff and went on to join the P&C as secretary for many years and took on a role of fundraising for the school through multiple events each year. My 'private' good had a very direct 'public' benefit for my children's school community.

The funds raised for SRE are used to support the 1000's of volunteers, to ensure they are trained, provided with excellent curriculum, and meet all the working with children criteria. Knowing the incredible social good that volunteering provides in the community and the benefits in social connectedness and mental health, I am surprised that any government would seek to remove funding from a model that so strongly supports this great work.

I applaud the commission's desire to uplift philanthropic giving and acknowledge the need to simplify giving for people and to perhaps broaden the criteria for DGR status. I would ask the commission to reconsider the punitive approach of removing DGR status for SRE.