

Submission to Productivity Commission re Proposed removal of Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status for Religious Education in schools.

I strongly support retaining the Deductible Gift Recipient status for Religious Education in schools in Australia for the following reasons:

- i) Religious Education is a valuable contribution to Australian society, and society values, and should still be tax deductible. When Religious Education is taught in schools, some of the benefits include that people are taught to value each other e.g 'Do to others as you would want them to do to you', and to consider others before themselves.
- ii) Tax deductibility (DGR status) should be available to donors to Religious Education because Religious Education has substantial benefits in teaching young people society's values including kindness, goodness, love of justice and mercy, care and concern for the welfare of others. Removing DGR status would greatly limit organisations which provide quality education programs.
- iii) Children need to know the stories of the Bible because they are the basis of much of the English language, and of our laws and legal system. Many of our sayings, and cultural values are based on the Bible, (and especially on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ).
- iv) Donors to teachers of Religious Education can observe how their donation has been used. School principals observe teaching standard, classroom management and adherence to the values of the school. State education authorities e.g NSW Board of Studies checks each curriculum used by Religious Education teachers meets Departmental guidelines.
- v) Many medical advances have been attributed in my lifetime to Christian believers who refer to being taught Christian values during their education. I would like to mention Dr Catherine Hamlyn who treated fistula injuries in Ethiopia, and the Garvan Institute of Medical Research (Darlinghurst, NSW), founded on Christian principles.
- vi) Many people attribute their Community Service in adult years to being taught Christian values during religious education. One example is John Howard (ex Prime Minister of Australia) who attended a NSW government school. Other examples include people who work or volunteer for humanitarian services such as the Salvation Army, Mission Australia, Parramatta Mission.
- vii) Australia is a multi-cultural society. Religious Education allows people of different religions to teach their cultural history and beliefs to students who choose to be taught that religion.
- viii) Organisations supporting teachers of Religious Education provide a service that governments don't offer, and that many parents choose for their children.
- ix) Religious freedom enshrined in our society includes the teaching of religion in schools, and this should be supported with tax relief, enabling a valuable service to be maintained. Donations for Religious Education are as much a choice for giving as giving for any other cause (e.g those mentioned in the Draft Report for future giving).

- x) People who make donations for reasons of faith are facing the same cost of living pressures as everyone else, and tax deductibility helps them to continue donating to what they consider is a very worthwhile cause.

Reasons for giving include (adapted from the Draft Report): All of these support maintaining DGR status for Religious Education:

(Faith, Personal experience, Making a difference [especially to young people – setting good goals, unselfish behaviour]).

Religious organisations do play an important role in many people's lives. Faith communities, especially Christian, have made a positive contribution to Australian Society and the present system of DGR status for Religious Education should continue as it is.