

The 2019 review into Australian Education clarified that there are many who contribute to a productive and effective education that promotes wellbeing for all young Australians.

To hear that the Tax Deductible status for SRE related charities is being questioned makes me think that recent findings have been missed or overlooked. Below I quote how the 2019 education declaration places shared responsibility upon the community to assist with 2 goals for student wellbeing. Those who volunteer as SRE (Special Religious Education) teachers of varied faith backgrounds are a unique part of the school community. They need to be well supported and trained for this role.

To remove tax-deductible status from organisations that resource and support this volunteer body would be to diminish support for those who support student wellbeing. This would be unfair and result in poorer outcomes for students. It would limit the resources that contribute to equipping excellent education.

SRE contributes significantly to the spiritual wellbeing of students with faith backgrounds, for many reasons.

It also gives an opportunity for students of other backgrounds to become more informed for a respectful engagement in discussion with people with different views.

More information:

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (DECEMBER 2019) declares that the responsibility for the two education goals (page 4) for all young Australians is shared.

"Achieving these education goals is the responsibility of Australian Governments and the education community in partnership with young Australians, their families and carers and **the broader community.**"

How do SRE teachers contribute uniquely to the stated goals of this declaration?

First, they provide lessons that allow all students to explore and celebrate their unique spiritual/cultural background.

The goal of nurturing confidence in all students is supported uniquely by SRE.

Page 5 explains the goal for all students to become confident individuals with this point:

“have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing“

The document articulates our hope that students are enabled to manage their wellbeing through nurturing a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity. SRE helps students to manage their wellbeing by building into their unique a sense of self, which includes their religious/spiritual identity.

A student’s spiritual beliefs and identity is able to be explored and celebrated in SRE.

What other educational activities in the school could be expected to facilitate spiritual wellbeing that caters for the unique spiritual identities of the students? It may be argued that there are elements of extra-curricula activities that have a spiritual aspect, but these cannot help all students to embrace their own family's spiritual/cultural identity. SRE uniquely contributes to this.

Second, the unique nature of SRE promotes cohesive society through building a depth of religious mutual understanding. In my personal experience as an SRE teacher, I have heard many students share that their family is non-religious but these families have chosen SRE for their children. Some have stated that their parents want them to be informed about religion. These students are being equipped through SRE to have meaningful and respectful interactions with peers of religious backgrounds in SRE as well as for the rest of their lives. These students experience the benefits of SRE which the education declaration states:

Example 1:

Page 7: One aspect of being 'successful life-time learners' is described as being able to "engage in respectful debate on a diverse range of views'

Example 2:

Page 5: One aspect of excellence and equity is that our education system will "ensure that education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society that values, respects and appreciates different points of view and cultural, social, linguistic and religious diversity"

The contributors to this declaration remind us that mutual understanding and interest results in a respectful and cohesive society.

SRE contributes uniquely to these stated educational goals and deserves the support provided by ongoing tax deductible status.