

7 Feb 2024

Philanthropy inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

### **Draft report – Future foundations for giving**

I am writing in response to the recently published draft report and its proposals to redefine which organisations will qualify for deductible gift recipient status.

No doubt there are grounds for some adjustments to this system.

However I am writing to express concern that the changes will remove DGR status from education funds used to support Special Religious Education in NSW schools.

I write as someone who has been involved in SRE as a student, as a parent of children participating in SRE, and as an SRE teacher at various schools. Something I value about the current SRE arrangements is the opportunity for various different faiths to offer SRE at a school. This is a valuable expression of thick multi-culturalism and promotes meaningful informed dialogue between different groups involved at a school.

SRE enjoys widespread support in New South Wales and is not going away. SRE teachers are largely volunteers. The quality of SRE teaching is strongly related to the level of support and training provided by Registered Providers. I recently attended the annual conference run by Anglican Youthworks which provided invaluable input to teachers on how to operate well in the SRE context, including the care of neurodiverse children in classes. The work of these Registered Providers will be significantly impacted by the removal of DGR status. This will result in a decrease in the quality of teaching.

If DGR status is withdrawn, larger SRE providers such as Anglicans and Catholics will stumble on, but with reduced support and training for teachers. I am concerned that without DGR status, smaller providers (Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic) will end up without sufficient resources to operate at all. The community-wide benefit of access to religious instruction in a variety of faiths in NSW schools will be lost.

I urge you to reconsider this proposal, and to retain DGR status for religious education in public schools.

Yours faithfully,  
Thomas Barrett