



**Submission re Future Foundations for Giving
(Proposed removal of DGR status for giving to Special Religious Education in schools)
Southwest Sydney Christian SRE Board, Sydney, NSW**

The Southwest Sydney SRE Board is a sub-committee of SU Generate and is responsible for the provision of Combined Christian Special Religious Education (SRE) in four local high schools. The Board has an excellent relationship with each school staff and community.

The Board was established by seven local Protestant Churches in Southwest Sydney from a variety of Christian denominations who saw the provision of SRE at the local high schools as a continuation of their existing SRE program in the feeder Primary Schools. Board members who act on a voluntary basis include representatives from these local Churches as well as two community members not aligned with these Churches.

The local Churches supporting the Board are:

- Hoxton Park Anglican Church
- Lifegate Church
- Liverpool Presbyterian Church
- Moorebank Hammondville Anglican Church
- Parkside Baptist Church
- St Luke's Anglican Church Liverpool
- St. Mark's Anglican Church Sadleir

The Board employs two qualified SRE teachers on a 1.0 FTE permanent part-time basis each to teach weekly at Holsworthy, Moorebank, John Edmondson and Bonnyrigg High Schools In 2023. In 2023, over 160 students attended Christian SRE classes across the four schools.

The annual cost of employing the two teachers is approximately [REDACTED]. In addition, the Board covers the costs associated with hosting and conducting the annual Teacher Commissioning afternoon, the Pastors Annual Report meeting and a number of information and fund raising events.

The Board is responsible for raising sufficient funds to cover wholly these costs. Funds are raised by the Board through individual donations from members of the local community and

from local Church offertory funds. Funds are also raised at information and fundraising events conducted by the Board throughout the year.

Feedback from our donors, in particular those who make annual donations in excess of \$1000, indicates that tax deductibility is a significant factor when considering the amounts they are able to donate each year. In addition, the Board relies heavily on the tax deductibility of donations to attract attendees to information and fundraising events.

Donations are made as expressions of faith to give to the religious education of young people so they can explore issues of faith in their formative years. Donations are not made for any personal or private gain or benefit. Without the generous donations the Board receives each year, it will be impossible to continue to offer SRE in the local high schools.

The Board believes strongly that SRE programs in government schools have proven student wellbeing benefits and contribute positively to the school community and that there is an intrinsic link between formative religious instruction in childhood years and religious service in adult years, and the community-wide benefits of this Christian service.

The Board also believes that as the NSW Department of Education has recognised the community-wide benefit of SRE by including it in the wellbeing framework of their curriculum, if SRE was not provided by local church members, there would be an undersupply of religious education for young people in the school setting.

It should also be noted that the amount of donations collected by the Board are almost exclusively used to provide gainful employment for two teachers (on a part time basis) who in turn contribute to the society at large by way of personal income tax. From a financial view point, the Board would argue that the amount of personal income tax collected far exceeds any tax deduction offset offered to donors.

Accordingly, the DGR status of SU Generate for the purposes of giving to SRE is crucial, and the Board urges the Federal Government to recognise and value the positive contribution that faith communities make to Australian society in this policy decision.

This submission, prepared on behalf of Southwest Sydney Christian SRE Board members as well as each of the local Churches that support the Board, respectfully request that the DGR status of giving for Special Religious instruction in schools in Australia is preserved.

Yours sincerely

Adel Habib
Chair, Southwest Sydney Christian SRE Board