

Dear Commissioners,

I was alarmed to read of the proposed removal of the Deductible Gift Recipient status of SRE in public schools in the draft report. Whilst I applaud the Government's willingness to support and increase philanthropic giving over the next decade, I feel that removing the DGR status of SRE will only serve to undermine this very goal.

I myself benefited greatly from SRE - although I can't recall the specifics of what was taught during the lessons I received throughout primary and high school, I do remember the dedication, patience and selflessness of the volunteer teachers who came week in, week out to share their faith despite an often inattentive and challenging audience. These teachers physically embodied the life of faith they taught, and were key in my own commitment to becoming a Christian (in fact the conversation that brought me to faith was with my old scripture teacher after I had graduated from high school).

Having becoming a Christian, I am committed to giving often and generously to my community because the God who has saved me is the epitome of loving generosity. >10% of my income is committed to charity and ministry work in Australia and overseas and I have deliberately chosen to work less days so that I can also serve in my local school as an SRE teacher. Every week I am able to witness the impact of SRE on students in the classroom. I find it amazing that the good news about Jesus can unite, encourage and bring hope to children from all cultures and backgrounds, irrespective of their wealth or ability. Because I teach in my local community I can witness firsthand the impact of SRE from classroom into the community; I can be at the local park or at my apartment blocks community area and witness children who have come from SRE trying to love and forgive and share with their friends/siblings/even parents.

I do believe that SRE strengthens children psychologically as they learn that they are loved unconditionally, that it encourages them to love and respect ALL their peers, irrespective of culture/race just as God invites all people into His family, and that it teaches children to be generous, to give just as God has given generously to them. I was encouraged to see data demonstrating that people of faith are 25% more likely than their secular counterparts to donate money and 23% more likely to volunteer time.

In essence my personal experience both as a student in SRE and now as a SRE teacher with children of my own tells me that SRE is a good thing and we should be trying to support, not harm this largely volunteer driven institution which is what will undoubtedly happen if its DGR status is removed.