

I write in relation to the Productivity Commission Draft Report regarding philanthropic giving in Australia (Future foundation for giving).

I strongly support maintaining the DGR status for SRE (Special Religious Education) in public schools.

I have volunteered to teach SRE at my local public school and my own children have participated in SRE classes at the same school. I value the impact that these lessons have had assisting the students to develop a faith-based world view. I value the connections that SRE fosters between faith-based communities and students within the school. I value the contribution that SRE classes make to fostering a vibrant, authentic, and respectful pluralistic community at the school.

I believe that it is critical for a democratic, multi-faith society (like Australia) to recognize the role that religious communities play in the social fabric of the nation. Citizens with a religious worldview are 25% more likely to donate their money and 23% more likely to donate their time. The government should both recognize and celebrate this philanthropic motivation that exists within religious communities.

At a personal level, my Christian faith provides me with the motivation to make regular donations to the SRE program at my local school. I derive great joy from making tax deductible donations to a program that engages students with the tenets of faith and cultivates social acceptance amongst the wider student body. Without such programs, the link between students and their faith communities would be threatened and the risk of isolation and radicalization increase.

For these reasons I strongly support maintaining the DRG status for SRE.

Matthew Ross