

To whom it may concern,

I am a special religious educator (volunteer), an SRE/ RI curriculum creator and a professional senior primary school teacher, graduating from Armidale Teachers College in 1992.

I am very concerned about a proposal to remove the DGR status from Private Religious School Building funds and Religious Education SRE/ RI.

Private Religious Schooling is the fastest growing sector in education across Australia, making up a 3rd of the educational institutions. The demand is increasing rapidly. As an example, I know of one family (of no religious belief) in Coffs Harbour desperately trying to relocate their children into a 'not to be named' private religious school. This parent has personally written to me three times asking if I can help get them into this particular school. Unfortunately for this family, the school is full to capacity, but expanding to meet the growing need.

Over populated Public schools are already bursting at the seams. Our country needs the private religious school sector to flourish, easing the burden on public schools and giving parents choice. The proposal to remove the DGR status threatens to stifle the giving of generous parents and philanthropists who make the private religious schools possible and allow them to expand.

Removing the DGR status will also impact negatively on the 10,000 volunteer teachers taking Religious education into public schools each week. This group of volunteers represents the 2nd largest group in Australia, just behind surf lifesaving.

Our mandate as educators is to educate the 'whole' child. The one aspect of a child the professional teacher does not educate is the spiritual aspect. Religious education closes this gap. Values such as hope, peace, resilience, compassion, love for neighbours, respect and tolerance are taught and discussed.

Removing the DGR status for Religious education will sadly result in a reduction of donations. This will impact tremendously on training and the delivery of high quality curriculums, teaching and learning.

On a personal note, I am a current producer and creator of Religious education video curriculum resources all funded by generous donations from generous people. I pride myself on creating a product of the highest standards. I ensure the students are engaged, challenged, open to questioning, discuss, learn and grow.

If financial support was compromised in any way, as is being proposed, my resources would suffer as would the students (and parents who choose religious education).

The flow on effect would also financially impact camera operators, camera stores editors, script writers, actors, dancers, musicians, recording studios, fancy dress hire, film footage creators, local takeaway food outlets and my family's income.

Removing the DGR status will greatly compromise this great work. This would be a sad loss to the community. Do not remove the DGR status for Faith Based schools, religious education and charities. In my opinion it would be a huge mistake.

Kind regards

Adrian Penny