



**Christian Religious
Instruction Alliance** | **Qld**

PO Box 2096
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2nd February 2024.

**Productivity Commission
Draft Report on Philanthropy**

Submission re Recommendation 6.1. A simpler, refocused DGR system that creates fairer and more consistent outcomes for donors, charities, and the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a response to the Draft Report.

The Christian Religious Instruction Alliance in Qld represents 15 Christian denominations in Qld, including: Acts Global Church, Anglican Archdiocese of Southern Qld, Australian Christian Churches (Qld), Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, Churches of Christ, Qld, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, International Network of Churches, Lutheran Church of Australia, Qld Division, Presbyterian Church of Qld, Queensland Baptists, Qld Congregational Churches, Salvation Army, Qld Division, Uniting Church in Australia, Qld Synod, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

The Alliance oversees the delivery of Christian Religious Instruction in Queensland.

Approximately 200 000 parents have consented their children into the RI program in Qld. An estimated 2500 volunteers deliver the program in State Schools across Queensland.

This submission argues DGR status for:

1. “net community-wide benefits that would otherwise be undersupplied:.
2. Net benefits from providing Australian Government support for the activity through subsidising philanthropy
3. There is unlikely to be a close nexus between donors and beneficiaries, such as the material risk of substitution between fees and donations”

It also argues that all activities in the subtype “advancing religion” should be excluded from DGR Status, including Religious Education in State Schools.

We believe that Religious Education in State Schools

1. Provides net community-wide benefits that are otherwise being under supplied

2. There are net benefits to the Australian Government by “subsidising” philanthropy to this work
3. There is no nexus between donors and beneficiaries – there is no risk of substitution between fees and donations.

Net Community Wide Benefits.

Research in Australia and overseas consistently shows the benefits to mental health and well being and strong social conscientiousness in children and young people who participate in religious activity on a regular basis.

Research also shows that people who incorporate religious practices live longer, are less prone to suicide, less likely to divorce, and generally experience better mental and physical health. Gross and Redman (Attached papers) identify Religious Instruction in State Schools as offering key contributions to:

1. Values education
2. Facilitating a child’s health and well being
3. Enriching religious diversity leading to a more robust multiculturalism
4. Strengthening students’ culture and identity
5. Creating a safe place to discuss faith and belief

The Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health’s study (Attached paper) demonstrated that children and adolescents who participate in spiritual practices were more likely to report greater life satisfaction, and significantly less likely to have depressive symptoms, smoke, use illicit drugs, or have sexually transmitted infections than people raised with less regular spiritual habits.

Given the significant community-wide concerns about mental health and well being generally, but also particularly in young people, Religious Education in State Schools provides benefits to the community that are demonstrably being under supplied.

Net Benefits to the Australian Government.


The Productivity Commission’s draft report states:

“additional net community benefits from extending the DGR system to include the purposes of purely advancing religion are not apparent.” Page 192.

The net community benefits as demonstrated by research flows then onto benefits to the Australian Government by virtue of relief to the health budget, and the social services budget. Not only individuals who are religious, but also religious communities provide services to their communities that increase social cohesion, extend help to those in need, and thus benefit the well being of society, decreasing the load on government services.

No Nexus between donors and beneficiaries.

In Queensland, the parents and care-givers of over 200 000 children choose Religious education for their children, in one of the faiths offered – Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Muslim.



The donor profile for the Christian RI Alliance is religious community and wider community members. The overwhelming majority of these donors do not have children in the RI program. Of those that do, the families participate in a local religious community anyhow, and contribute financially to that community so the nexus of private benefit regarding RI in state schools is negligible. There is no risk of donations being substituted for fees.

Educational Value.

The vast majority of Religious education in state schools in Queensland uses curricula that have been reviewed to be pedagogically acceptable and also consistent with Departmental guidelines and procedures. Religious Education is delivered by trained volunteers, and in some cases, paid employees of local religious entities. Queensland RI providers have invested heavily in ensuring that the programme is well run and has pedagogical integrity.

Also of concern if “advancing religion” is singled out in a broad brush approach as being excluded from DGR status is the ongoing marginalization of faith in Australian society, and the perception that living a faith is simply a private exercise. It is demonstrably not. The ongoing marginalization of faith is having a detrimental effect in pushing some people of faith out of participation in wider society. The increase in home schooling is of particular concern to faith leaders, as this risks social cohesion and engagement. Faith leaders are keen to see government institutions – such as state schools - be a safe and supportive space for people of faith.

We fail to see how under ACNC charity categories Advancing Education (which includes less formal education aimed at developing life skills), Advancing Culture (which includes music and fine arts, foundations for theatre, ballet, and opera), and Promoting reconciliation, mutual respect and tolerance (which includes promoting harmony and reducing conflict) should access DGR status when Religious Education in State Schools – which addresses many of these issues, does not.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully,

David Baker
Chair, Christian RI Alliance in Qld; Co-Chair, Multi Faiths RI Network.