

SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION PHILANTHROPY REPORT

Re: Proposal to withdraw tax-deductibility from charities related to religious education.

1. Our Federal Constitution begins with the words “Trusting in Almighty God”, which recognises the religious/ Christian origins of our democracy. It is, in my opinion, therefore for our children to be taught about these religious origins and the values which have since influenced our laws and social structures, including the establishment of many charities.
2. In my 40 years in education as a teacher and school Principal, I have seen a reduction in religious education as part of the normal school activities. Christian organisations like Scripture Union and Christian Education in Schools have stepped up to fill this gap, with the help of many volunteers. They have also had the privilege of tax-deductible status, which has encouraged donors to contribute to the costs of School Chaplains, who have given much-appreciated help to students struggling with problems affecting their well-being.
3. In my time as Principal of a Christian school, I found a significant difference in the relationships between staff members, compared with relationships in government schools. There was a greater team spirit and cohesion, because of their common values. I also observed these differences among the students. On a number of occasions, I enrolled students who had been very unhappy in their government school and were falling behind in their learning. After a very short time, they settled in, were accepted by other students and, according to their parents, were much happier and more focussed on their learning. I believe the Christian ethos of respect, kindness and trust, encouraged by both staff and students has been a major factor in this change. These values are taught as part of the Christian school’s curriculum.

I am disturbed that some of the proposals in the Draft Report seem to encourage the retraction of Government support for Christian charities and education, I am concerned that this would not be helping our children to understand and adopt the basic values which have helped build our nation to what it is. Just as immunisation protects our children from various diseases, I believe Christian education can help prepare our children to face some of the challenges they will encounter as they progress into adulthood.