



Response from Ruyton Girls' School to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report *Future Foundations for Giving*, released 30 November 2023

Summary Recommendation

Withdrawal of deductible gift recipient status to Building Funds in primary and secondary schools.

Background

Established in 1878 and located in the Melbourne suburb of Kew, Ruyton Girls' School is an independent, forward thinking girls' school committed to preparing girls for a lifetime of learning, leadership and engagement in the global community.

As a mid-sized school with over 940 students from Early Learning to Year 12, Ruyton fosters the individuality of each student in a caring and safe environment, nurturing the intellectual, physical, social and emotional qualities essential to flourish.

Response

We are writing to request that the Productivity Commissioner reconsider its recommendation of withdrawal of Deductible Gift Recipient Status for School Building Funds.

Ruyton is the school it is today thanks to the philanthropic support from many members of the school community over generations. Our facilities are the result of careful financial management and planning of the School Board and Executive and philanthropic support from members of our community. As a higher-fee independent school, any government funding we receive is limited.

We have not included a voluntary building fund levy on our fee invoices to parents since 2018, and have instead developed a dedicated philanthropy program that includes an annual giving appeal, major gifts program and a bequest society.

Over the past 15 years, we have completed three major building projects at Ruyton with the development of a new Performing Arts Centre and Library being the final project in our current masterplan. Over \$3 million has been raised towards this latest project through a capital campaign, with the majority of donations coming from current and past parents and alumnae. The purpose-built facility will strengthen Ruyton's commitment and capacity to deliver an outstanding all-round education and support our girls to become confident women who will challenge, shape and change the world.

Ruyton also has a scholarship fund which provides a financially means-tested scholarship to a young girl who could otherwise not afford to attend Ruyton. It is hoped that through the generosity of our community we can build this to provide a number of scholarships every year in perpetuity. The scholarship fund is mostly supported by current parents and alumnae.

RUYTON GIRLS' SCHOOL

12 Selbourne Road Kew 3101
Victoria Australia

Tel + 61 3 9819 2422
Fax + 61 3 9818 4790

ruyton@ruyton.vic.edu.au
www.ruyton.vic.edu.au

ABN 86 004 162 261
CRICOS 00336J



Should DGR status be withdrawn from school building funds, our philanthropic support for building projects is likely to decline. With tax deductibility motivating most of our donors to give significant gifts to capital projects, the amount our school can raise for these works through donations will decrease significantly. This will inevitably lead to an increased cost to our community through the raising of school fees at time when Victorian independent schools are also now required to pay payroll tax to the State Government.

Our donors, whether they be current parents, past parents or alumnae do not receive any private benefit for their donations. In fact, many of our philanthropic contributions come from donors who are making contributions to benefit future generations of Ruyton students. There is no link at all between donations and fees. Our fee statements do not include a voluntary building fund levy. Donations are only sought through dedicated fundraising appeals and campaigns. Aside from tax deductibility, our donors give because they appreciate the education Ruyton provides and want to see it sustained into the future. A donation is their way of showing gratitude for Ruyton and leaving a legacy for future generations.

Recommendation

Philanthropic contributions have assisted Ruyton in maintaining and investing in facilities over generations for use by our students and the broader community. We implore the Productivity Commission to reconsider its recommendation to withdraw DGR status from school building funds. If schools like Ruyton lose DGR status from their building funds, we will see a decline in donations for facilities which will lead to an increased cost to our community for the maintenance of our buildings and the development of new ones to meet changing educational needs. This has the potential to push independent education past the point of affordability for many families.

Linda Douglas
Principal

Peter Nelson
President of the Board and
Chair of the Ruyton Foundation