

## **Submission In Favour of the Continuation of DGR Status for Religious Education in Public Schools and for School Building Funds.**

Let us put it to you as plainly as we can. We have lived for nearly 73 years and 76 years. In our lives we are most thankful for what we have learned from the Bible. We appreciate completely what we were taught in Religious Education classes in public schools. We learned that the values of the Bible are love, joy, peace, thankfulness, forgiveness, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We saw these values in those who taught us, and we have sought to live by them. It is in love and service to others, as taught in the Bible, that there is social cohesion and stability. We have sadly observed that where the Bible is dispensed with and those values rejected, that there is greed, self-seeking, entitlement, violence, disregard for the welfare of others, drunkenness, drug abuse, and all kinds of social divisiveness, including family and societal breakdown. In the report, philanthropy is highlighted as being a value worth promoting, and it is precisely in religious education that philanthropy makes any sense. This is evident by the fact that the largest group of weekly volunteers in Australia are those who volunteer to teach SRE weekly in public schools. Research as well as anecdotal evidence points soundly to the benefits of religious education in society promoting harmony and well-being.

We in Australia need to support SRE in public schools and not seek to undermine it by removing DGR Status for Religious Education in Public Schools.

As to those deriving benefit from the tax deductibility of school building funds being those who have contributed or their family members, this is equally true of other charities as well. People give where they are committed, to see the benefits to those they care for, and countless others as well. It is generosity. People give to hospitals with the hope that they will provide good health care. Equally people give to schools that provide good education and they show their commitment by sending their own children to them. The move to private education must surely send a clear message that many ordinary Australians highly value the education that religious schools offer.

Research shows very clearly that Religious Education provides very strong community-wide benefits. SRE provides instruction in religious faiths in a safe and monitored environment, where skills of critical thinking are taught and students have opportunity to understand and evaluate other ways of thinking. This is especially important so that radical content on the media, or world radical events, can be discussed and evaluated, and racial and religious

tensions can be diffused. We value highly the critical thinking component of the SRE programs in our local high schools and the focus on understanding other major world views. Students from many ethnic backgrounds have opportunity to learn about other faiths and worldviews, and to evaluate their own worldview in a monitored environment. This leads to healthy respect for others, gives greater understanding of similarities and differences, and gives a realistic framework for students to make decisions for themselves.

By removing DGR Status from Religious Education and School Building Funds you are placing undue financial pressure on what is effectively contributing to the welfare and well-being of Australian Society, and will be to its untold detriment in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Clive and Meryl Beddoe