

Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission

My brief submission is from myself as a person who has been involved in the context of teaching in schools in NSW both private and public. I have taught Science subjects in NSW Departmental schools, have taught and still teach SRE in public schools, as an ordained Anglican clergyman I have been a chaplain in an Anglican school and I have been responsible for the in-service training of ordained persons in the diocese of Sydney. This experience spans just over 50 years.

My comment particularly applies to Propositions B and C in the Consultation paper.

While I recognise that schools are able to give preference to teachers of religion and indeed teachers whose duties include home-room responsibilities, they are not able to give preference to the employment of staff more broadly. This seems to be restrictive in a way that will change the very nature of the education that is offered. For example a Christian school would not be able to give preference to the appointment of staff who share that same Christian commitment.

This does not reflect enough that no teacher teaches from a neutral philosophical context. Their own world view will colour the classroom teaching and discussion and interaction formally and informally with students. For example while the same curriculum may be taught in a science class the emphasis and discussion from a teacher who believes that the world has been created by a personal God will differ from a teacher who believes that the world has been formed by chance and time. It seems unreasonable that the Christian school cannot prefer a science teacher who teaches and endorses their view of the world. The same could be said of each of the subjects taught.

As well the interaction between teacher and student is by no means limited to formal classroom instruction. There will be many times of informal/casual interaction sometimes over extended times such as excursions. In these times students will hear and observe the teachers' life and priorities. The Christian school would want their staff to be living observable Christian lives in these settings as well.

I trust that the Consultation Paper will be revisited to allow schools to give preference in the employment of staff who are committed to the faith position of that school.

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