



17th April, 2012

To the School Council  
c/- School Council President  
SCHOOLNAME  
ADDRESS  
SUBURB STATE POSTCODE

Dear School Council President and School Council members,

### **Special Religious Instruction**

I represent Fairness in Religions in School (FIRIS), a parent-driven grassroots campaign, committed to working for inclusive non-discriminatory education about religions in school.

We believe that the practice of volunteer-run Special Religious Instruction (SRI) during school hours should cease. Our goal is to change the way children currently experience religion in Victoria State schools. This is not something that school principals, teachers and School Councils can achieve alone. FIRIS was created to find a State-wide solution.

More information about SRI and our campaign is outlined in the enclosed brochure and on our website at [religionsinschool.com](http://religionsinschool.com)

FIRIS is writing to you as a Victorian School Council President to seek your support and to invite you to raise the issue of SRI at your next School Council meeting.

If your school offers SRI (either Christian or another religion), we invite you to:

- seek advice from your School Principal regarding the school's compliance with the new DEECD School Policy for Special Religious Instruction;
- confirm that your school is complying with recent changes to the policy - the enclosed document explains the changes and implications for your school; and
- ensure that your website and enrolment documentation make it clear that your school offers SRI so that families can make an informed choice about the curriculum at your school.

If your school does not offer SRI, you may wish to discuss how you would feel if your school was approached by a provider wishing to conduct SRI at the school. As things stand, the DEECD School Policy for SRI is that schools cannot refuse such an approach.

The Australian Education Union has passed a resolution calling for SRI to be run outside normal school hours.

FIRIS invites all Victorian School Councils to pass a similar motion:

*That the ### School Council is committed to maintaining an inclusive school curriculum that does not require any student to withdraw from class on account of different religious beliefs, and does not support the practice of volunteer-run Special Religious Instruction (SRI) during school hours.*



You may also wish to pass the following motion:

*School facilities would be made available for Special Religious Instruction during lunchtimes or as an after school program, provided that the volunteer instructor is a qualified teacher.*

Or you may wish to word your own motion.

While School Councils are required to comply with policies, guidelines, advice and directions issued under the Education and Training Reform Act, School Councils are the governing body of the school and should be questioning any Government policies that have a harmful effect on a school's mission as set by the School Council or that could result in children being discriminated against on religious grounds.

If you currently offer SRI at your school, passing a motion such as this will not prevent SRI providers from being able to deliver classes at your school. But, you will have made a strong statement and will help lead to a change in Government policy.

FIRIS invites you to:

- raise the issue of Special Religious Instruction at your next School Council meeting;
- pass the above motions; and
- advise FIRIS of your School Council position on this matter by emailing [religionsinschool@gmail.com](mailto:religionsinschool@gmail.com)

Please join other School Councils across Victoria in supporting our campaign to change the way children currently experience religion in Victoria State schools.

Regards,

Tim Heasley  
President  
Fairness in Religions in School (FIRIS)