

## Your rights

- ❖ **To say NO** to your child taking part in scripture by declaring 'no religion' on the enrolment form and/or writing to the principal at any time.
- ❖ To write to the school and **to say NO** to your child taking part in any religious activity, including school prayers, religious services and observances.
- ❖ **To know** how scripture classes are organised and which religious organisations deliver scripture.
- ❖ **To ask** the principal for the name and contact details of the approved scripture provider or their local representative.
- ❖ **To have access to information** on a website containing lesson content or an outline of the curriculum used by a scripture provider.
- ❖ **To request information** about the content of lessons from scripture providers.
- ❖ **To protect your child** from being exposed to the content of scripture lessons by ensuring the school places children taking part in scripture in a separate physical space from students not taking part.
- ❖ **To complain** to the principal about any issues with the scripture provider or lesson content.

## Contact us

Fairness in Religions in School  
PO Box 2296, Dangar, NSW, 2309  
Website: <http://religionsinschool.com>  
Email: [religionsinschool@gmail.com](mailto:religionsinschool@gmail.com)  
Facebook: [secularschools](https://www.facebook.com/secularschools)  
Twitter: [@secularschools](https://twitter.com/secularschools)



## Who is FIRIS?

Fairness in Religions in School (FIRIS) is a group of parents and citizens who want education about religions in state schools to be:

- ❖ consistent with Australia's multicultural society
- ❖ delivered by teachers employed by education departments without bias using materials developed by those departments
- ❖ respectful of the secular nature of state schools
- ❖ inclusive, not divisive or discriminatory
- ❖ committed to fostering citizenship.

FIRIS supports the NSW Department of Education's statement that 'schools are neutral grounds for rational discourse and objective study' and that public schools should not be arenas for 'opposing political views or ideologies'. The Department allows religious organisations to do things other organisations cannot.

FIRIS believes the Department should apply its policies consistently and fairly throughout every school day.

## What you can do

- ❖ **Take your child out of scripture ('SRE')** and encourage other parents to do the same. FIRIS has a letter you can use available on our website.
- ❖ **Contact the Department of Education** if you have any questions:  
Phone: (02) 92445484  
Email: [srecontact@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:srecontact@det.nsw.edu.au)
- ❖ **Contact FIRIS** for support or if you have any concerns regarding anything your child is told during scripture or if you are not happy with what religious organisations are doing in your school. **FIRIS can help you** write a complaint to the principal.
- ❖ **Donate money** to support the campaign:  
BSB: 633000 Account: 145193314

Say NO to  
scripture  
in NSW  
public  
schools

- let's give  
lost learning time  
back to students!



**FIRIS**

Fairness In Religions  
In School

# What is the problem?

## Scripture ('Special Religious Education') is 'government-endorsed evangelism'

Religious organisations exploit out-of-date legislation and flawed Department of Education policy to treat public schools as 'an open door to the gospel', as 'mission fields' where 'the harvest is ready'.

The Department of Education's scripture committee is made up of members of a scripture lobby group which has said that the aim of scripture in NSW public schools is 'teaching all to obey Jesus Christ'. The lobby group sees the *Education Act 1990* and the access it grants to the 750,000 children in NSW government schools as a 'significant opportunity' to fulfil this Biblical command.

*Primary school children, those aged 5-12 years are NINE times more likely to accept Christ as their Saviour than people 12 years and above.*

C3 Victory Church (Newcastle) – Scripture Provider

## Scripture is unfair

Scripture takes up 3-6 days per year of valuable learning time. Students who do not go to scripture **cannot** continue being taught by teachers and cannot take part in formal school activities while scripture is on.

Scripture is unfair to minority religions. Nearly 90% of the approved scripture providers in NSW are Christian.

Scripture is unfair to students and parents with non-religious beliefs.

An activity that **cannot be shared by all students** should take place outside of school hours.

## Scripture providers **cannot** be trusted

The Queensland Department of Education and Training looked at the Sydney Anglican's *Connect* scripture lesson materials, also used in NSW, and found that they contained material that:

- is "**inappropriate** for the target age group": topics include murder, prostitution and animal sacrifice
- "may encourage **undesirable child safe behaviours**", such as the keeping of secrets and the formation of 'special friendships' with adults, likened to "possible grooming behaviour"
- has "the potential to affect the **social and emotional wellbeing** of particular students"
- poses risks to **health and safety**, such as mixing bleach and cordial
- is aimed at **converting** students to Christianity.

## Why is FIRIS concerned?

### The safeguards in NSW are **not good enough**

- The law says the Minister for Education has **no control** over what is taught during scripture.
- Scripture is **not delivered by teachers** employed by the Department of Education but by paid or volunteer representatives of religious organisations.
- A Department of Education teacher **does not need to be present** during scripture.
- The law and the Department of Education's policies and procedures enable principals to put children in scripture **without consent** from parents and caregivers.

## Scripture is used as an 'access all areas' pass

The Department of Education allows scripture instructors to volunteer in school activities, such as attending school camps and excursions, providing welfare support and performing playground duty.

The Department does not have a policy which makes it clear that these volunteering scripture instructors are not to try to convert students to their scripture program, their churches, or their religion.

*[Instructor] may...speak to students in the playground to encourage them to attend SRE.*

Advertisement for scripture instructor, Kotara Christian Education Association

## Scripture **divides** students

The law requires principals to divide students based on the religious beliefs of parents/caregivers and send them to scripture where they receive instruction in the beliefs and practices of one religion.

Scripture is **not inclusive** – it is **not education** about world religions.

*As a Scripture teacher there is rarely a day when I don't tell students the message of Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else"...The message of the Bible is that you will be sent to Hell unless you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus for your salvation. You need to do it now!*

Former scripture teacher, St Ives High School

