

Dear Ryan,

I hope you are well. As you know, we pray for you regularly at St Michael's.

I would normally write and post a letter, but I believe this is a matter of urgency.

I write concerning the high and heavy-handed interference by the Department of Education over the last 24 hours in the authorised curriculum of the Anglican Church (and some other denominations).

This morning I and my SRE Coordinators were rung by multiple local high and primary school principals seeking urgent assurance that we did not use three particular books in our SRE classes. Two of these books are on our publicly available list of authorised curriculum material published on our Youthworks website as required by the DEC.

My understanding is that legislatively it is the approved providers of SRE who determine the curriculum for the SRE classes they provide.

However these Principals, and to be fair, they were mostly embarrassed about it, issued us directives banning us from using the books.

One book (by Patricia Weerakoon) that is on the 'banned' list we have not and would not use in SRE since it is not on the list of approved curriculum resources. (I do however contend it is an entirely appropriate book for the public sphere, by a person properly qualified in the topic areas it addresses.)

We would never use the others two books in primary school anyway, since they are not authorised for primary SRE, nor are they age-appropriate. However we defend our right to use books on our approved, published, publicly available list of high school SRE curriculum and resources in his school SRE.

We will of course, respect the Department's temporary ban.

1. On what legal basis is it proper for the DEC to interfere this way? As a local high school principal wrote to me, DEC policy states that "Curriculum for special religious education is developed and implemented by approved providers".
2. If the DEC wishes to assert that these books breach some Departmental guideline, which Guidelines are they? Precisely how are the books in breach? What is the evidence? Has the existence of any alleged guidelines been properly, effectively, clearly communicated to SRE providers?
3. From a relational angle, is it proper or wise for the DEC to react abruptly to a "trial by media" prompted by a Victorian-based activist group FIRIS, with the SMH article, for example, containing misleading information, while at the same time failing to consult the accredited providers and to give a fair chance for a reasonable response?
4. Is the Department reviewing curricula of all other providers, especially those who share similar beliefs about sexual relations being rightly reserved for marriage of a man and a woman, for example, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim?
5. Can anyone explain what on earth is surprising or wrong with Christians teaching the children of parents who select Christian SRE that we believe monogamy is God's good purpose, and that sex is best reserved for marriage? We also teach our students that bullying is always wrong, and to love those with whom they disagree, even to love their enemies.

I would appreciate your attention in this matter.

I appreciate the demands and sacrifices your job as an MP entails and thank you for your service.

Warm regards,

Sandy

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"Jesus Is _____." What goes in the blank?

Check out <http://jesus-is.org.au>

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