



Dr Darrin Morgan  
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DGL20/67

Dear Dr Morgan

I write in response to your email of 10 February 2020, to Mr Mark Scott AO, Secretary, Department of Education, regarding Special Religious Education in NSW Government schools. The Secretary has asked me to respond on his behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Since 2014, the NSW Department of Education has responded to 29 letters to the Minister, 31 letters to the Department, 15 GIPA Act applications and 22 other forms of correspondence submitted by Fairness in Religions in Schools. The correspondence addresses similar issues pertaining to Special Religious Education, Special Education in Ethics, and Voluntary Student Activities of a Religious Nature in Schools in NSW Government schools.

The Department has responded with advice that aligns with the current legislation, policies and procedures for Special Religious Education, Special Education in Ethics and Voluntary Student Activities of a Religious Nature in Schools and the Department's Complaints Handling Policy.

You have been advised that if a parent/carer wants information on Special Religious Education, Special Education in Ethics and Voluntary Student Activities of a Religious Nature in Schools and the available options, they should contact the school. There is no statutory requirement for schools to respond to correspondence from various interest groups.

Fairness in Religions in Schools' public posts on social media are an ongoing concern to the Department, including a post from October 2019 that contained language '*Islam as a cancer*' and that '*we must destroy the cancer*'. This may incite someone to carry out an act that could attempt to harm the Islamic community and was presented as the view of the Liberty Baptist Church. This post caused significant distress for Islamic groups who work with the Department.

The Department requested assistance from the NSW Police Counterterrorism Unit. According to police report, E72680413 dated 29th November 2019, you were advised by police of legislation under the Crimes Act of the offence of publicly threatening / inciting violence on grounds of violence / religion. As a result, you advised police that you would remove the post. To date, the post has not been removed.

The Department has also been advised that Special Religious Education approved providers have made contact with the e-Safety Commissioner on behalf of the Islamic community in relation to the inappropriate post.

Due to the nature of the social media posts by Fairness in Religions in Schools, the Department will not respond to any communication and/or correspondence from Fairness in Religions in Schools.

I refer to the previous correspondence you have received from the Department in which the Department has provided Fairness in Religions in Schools with the Department's position and advice around Special Religious Education, Special Education in Ethics, and Voluntary Student Activities of a Religious Nature in Schools. This position and advice remain unchanged. Accordingly, any future correspondence to the Department from yourself, or any other representative of Fairness in Religions in Schools, which raises issues previously responded to will be noted and filed.

Yours sincerely



Garrie Russell  
**R/Director, Early Learning and Primary Education**  
03 April 2020

