

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli, MP,
Minister for Education,
Government of NSW

Dear Mr Piccoli,

The NSW Government has recently changed the school scripture enrolment form from an "opt out" to an "opt in" regime, beginning 2015. The former system has been in place for over 50 years and the choice of parents has always been protected. To have their children exempted from scripture classes, parents merely needed to write a note to the school.

Under the new system enrolment forms ask a Yes/No tick box question, "Would you like your son or daughter to attend SRE classes?" You can imagine the kitchen table conversation: "Do you want to do Scripture at school next year dear, or would you prefer a free period?"

The result? At ^{Item 3 (a) &}_(b) High School about 70% of students coming into Year 7 in 2015 will not be attending Scripture classes, compared to an average of less than 10% over the last 15 years. Of 65 Year 7 enrolment forms received to this point for the year 2015, 45 have nominated the non-Scripture option. With an expected enrolment of 112 for the 2015 school year, it is projected that 80 students will choose not to attend Scripture classes. This compares to only 11 Year 7 students from a total of 122 withdrawing from Scripture classes this year.

The flow on effect of the new policy will mean hundreds of students in coming years not gaining basic Bible knowledge through Scripture classes at ^{Items 3(a),}_{3(b)} High School alone, not to mention the thousands in government schools across NSW. That knowledge is their inalienable right.

We understand that Scripture teaching in all government schools in NSW, both Primary and High schools will be affected, if not immediately as in the case of ^{Items 3(a),}_{3(b)} High, then certainly in the next five years.

We urge that the decision to use a different enrolment form be revisited in favour of the previous system.

Item 3 (a) & (b)



SCRIPTURE 1999- 2013

- Year 7 average withdrawal from Scripture classes for the 15 years 1999 – 2013 was approximately 5%.

SCRIPTURE 2014

- Year 7: 122 students
- Non-Scripture: 11 students
- Approximately 10% Scripture class withdrawal

SCRIPTURE 2015

- Of 85 enrolment forms received to this point 62 have indicated Non-Scripture
- This equates to approximately 73% Scripture class withdrawal
- Expected Year 7 enrolment, 2015: 110 students
- Projected Scripture class withdrawal: 80 students
- **That is 80 students not attending Scripture classes in 2015 compared with 11 students not attending in 2014.**