



3 October 2014

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MHA  
Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education & Training  
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Dear Deputy Premier & Minister

**RE: The inclusion of secular workers in Chaplaincy in Schools program**

The Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the professional organisation supporting social workers in Tasmania. I write to express our strong support for the Tasmanian government to continue to negotiate for the inclusion of secular workers in the Chaplaincy in Schools program in Tasmania.

Our belief is that the needs of the community are best served by allowing each school to employ the most appropriately trained and experienced person in a role that supports our young people in schools. To narrow the selection process to those who belong to a particular religious faith, in our view would dramatically reduce the effectiveness of the program.

Past experiences have shown that chaplains who base their practice upon religious principles have taken particular stances on a range of sensitive issues that do not reflect the majority community view. The issues surrounding relationships, gender identity, homosexuality, birth control, and abortion are areas where young people need support and guidance. This can best be done by trained staff who are providing support based on the health and wellbeing needs of the young person rather than being based on a particular religious stance taken by a particular religious faith.

The Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers strongly advocates that the Tasmanian government continues to negotiate with the Australian Government to ensure that secular workers can be employed as part of the Chaplaincy in School program in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely

**Allyson Smith**  
President  
AASW Tasmanian Branch