



Tasmanian Branch

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19 March 2015

The Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MHA
Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education & Training
10th Floor, Executive Building
15 Murray Street
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Deputy Premier and Minister,

Re: The inclusion of secular workers in Chaplaincy in Schools Programme

Thank you for your reply of 27th November 2014, to our letter of October 3rd 2014, raising concerns of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) about the exclusion of secular workers from the Federal Government's Chaplaincy in Schools Programme. Your comments regarding discussions held with the Australian Government, and their stated stance on this issue, are duly noted.

The AASW wishes to acknowledge the commitment and understanding of the needs of Tasmanian State School students, demonstrated by the State government, through the provision of a unique and valued system of student support, delivered by a team of highly professional Psychologists, Social Workers and Speech Pathologists.

The AASW also acknowledges the additional support, and value placed on the Chaplaincy Programme, and also the work undertaken by the Tasmanian Department of Education, in developing a strong set of guidelines for the administration of this programme when it was established in our state.

The AASW is concerned, however, that the principles of diversity, universality, equality and open access to support are not being recognised or supported by the present model, and is seeking redress through ongoing commitment to advocate for the re- inclusion of secular workers.

The AASW is concerned that the revised Chaplaincy Programme model does not acknowledge or take account that School Principals and School Communities are best situated to identify and make choices about what services best meet the needs of their schools.

The re-inclusion of secular workers in this programme would add choice for the many families in our school communities who make an informed decision for a secular educational setting for their children.

An increasing number of families in our communities are from diverse faith, cultural and secular backgrounds, and would find access to a secular worker more relevant and appropriate to their needs, rather than the present Chaplaincy Programme, which is auspiced by the Scripture Union, and is Christian based.

The AASW believes that all children regardless of faith, ethnicity, belief system or cultural background should have access through choice to support programmes and services, and considers this could be addressed through the re inclusion of secular workers in this programme.

We would respectfully (as stated in our previous correspondence) urge our State Government and yourself as our Minister for Education, to commit to **continued** discussion with the Australian Government, on behalf of all in our school communities, and advocate for re-inclusion of secular workers to redress the present anomaly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allyson Smith".

Allyson Smith

Branch President

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