

## Education and Learning should be the priority for all students during class time in schools

P&C Federation's 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM) endorsed the position that students not enrolled in Special Religious Education (SRE) should be allowed to engage in curriculum-related work.

Under the New South Wales Department of Education's current Religious Education Policy, no formal school activities or academic education during times when SRE classes are running. This essentially means students not enrolled in SRE are barred from productive school work during these times.

A review into SRE and Special Education in Ethics (SEE) in Government schools recommended that this be changed to allow students not enrolled in SRE and SEE to do other regular classwork. However, the Department of Education rejected that recommendation earlier this year.

P&C Federation Susie Boyd commented "Considering the majority of students are not enrolled in these classes, it's inexplicable that we treat these classes with such privilege."

"We believe SRE classes should be treated as any other classes: students should be free to enrol in them, and those who don't should be free to do other productive work. Instead, we hear innumerable stories from parents about their children being forced to twiddle their thumbs for an hour while SRE classes are running. This amounts to about forty hours of the year where the majority of students are barred from studying, and from an educational standpoint, that simply makes no sense."

Ms Boyd added "There is no legal obligation to bar such students from study. Forty additional hours of educational instruction could make all the difference in lifting educational standards statewide, and given the constant concerns about our state's declining Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results one would think this would be a priority. We call on the Minister of Education to cease privileging a minority of SRE and SEE students at the expense of the majority, and allow all students to do productive work when these classes run."

Like all motions at the 2017 AGM, this position was formally adopted due to lobbying from P&C Associations in New South Wales.

"This motion reflects a groundswell of parents wanting their children to do productive work, and we intend to work from this point on to change the Government's policy on this matter."

**Sydney, NSW, 28 August 2017**

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