

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the National School Chaplaincy Program, built on the excellent history of school chaplaincy in Australia, which was introduced by the former Coalition Government in 2007/08 with a commitment of \$165 million for its first three years. It was endorsed by Prime Minister Rudd who said “they (Chaplains) actually are providing the glue which keeps school communities rolling”.

The program offers pastoral care and spiritual guidance to all. Chaplains necessarily have religious beliefs which underpin their work. These beliefs are representative of the school communities the chaplains work in and they do not hinder chaplains from working with those of other beliefs or none. It operates in 1915 schools and enjoys strong support among principals, schools and in the community generally.

The Rudd Government has extended funding for the program, at a reduced level, until the end of 2011, after which time there may be no more funding despite the program's social benefits, sound administration and strong community support. The Coalition has announced that if elected, it would continue funding the program in its current form, at its current level of \$165 million over 3 years.

We therefore ask that the Rudd Government continue funding for the National School Chaplaincy Program in its current form.