

Mr Gary Humphries
Senator for the ACT

Dear Senator,

Thank you for your letter addressed to Mr Paul Marshall, the Principal of Emmaus Christian School, dated 24 October 2008, regarding the proposed Schools Assistance Bill. We appreciate your seeking our comments and writing to us so promptly.

1. We are concerned that the legislation mandates that schools conform to the new national curriculum without exception. We are most concerned that all schools must adopt a curriculum that we have not seen, nor had any input into - noting that the parents of our school are pleased that we have a strong Christian influence throughout Emmaus Christian School and would be most concerned to depart from the principles that current teaching is based on. Noting that, Emmaus Christian School has consistently demonstrated a commitment to develop curriculum materials that are consistent with and based upon state and federal frameworks and profiles. However, we have serious concerns that any new national curriculum must have latitude to allow for the Biblical practices and principles to remain within the future curriculum.
2. Sources of funding. The concern here is that this requirement is superfluous to the requirements to calculate the SES funding position, and as such does not contribute to State or Federal government being able to better manage schools. What value-add does this type of reporting add to effective school management? All parents who pay taxes have a right to expect government funding and a right to select a school they feel meets their childrens requirements (regardless of public or independant school options). While some parents may choose to pay additional costs in higher fees for the right of choice; why does government feel they must investigate sources of funding? The issue here should be governments meeting their financial responsibility to support all schools on a dollar for dollar (matched) basis. If school board's work hard to establish and finance additional resources or programmes - then that is in the interest of the parents and their children; there is really no requirement for government intervention, nor even reporting - as long as the national curriculum requirements are being met.
3. School closure based on minor elements of audit review. This requirement is absurd and does not imbue a close working relationship between parents, schools, education departments nor both levels of government. If an audit is in process, parents and their children must be given every confidence that serious interuptions will not be effected for what might be minor or even explainable situations.

Thank you for seeking our view.

Yours sincerely

Dave Caldwell

Chairman

North Canberra Christian Education Association Board
(incorporating Emmaus Christian School, Dickson)