



31st October 2008

Mr. John Carter
Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear John,

I am the Principal of Highview Christian Community College, Maryborough in central Victoria. Highview has a vision to be a “genuinely accessible educational environment in which staff and students interact to foster optimal growth of the whole individual”. The College is committed to ensuring that in these interactions students will grow spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, aesthetically, inter-personally and with a social and environmental conscience.

Many of the students attending Highview travel daily to Maryborough from all over central Victoria, some as far as 75 kilometres. Their parents have chosen Highview as the school for their children because of the importance the College places on Christian values and pastoral care, as well as its unique academic program. These parents are supportive of Highview’s special programs that foster a ‘sense of belonging’, ‘honest, fulfilling human relationships with people of all ages’, self-discipline, compassion, mutual respect and an appreciation of different religions and different cultures.

As I interview each prospective student and his/her parents I enquire as to why they have chosen Highview. Families regularly inform me they support what the College stands for, its pastoral care and expectations, and that the other schools in their region do not place such emphasis on Christian values, Community Service and the development of students’ individual gifts and talents.

21 Kars Street, Maryborough 3465 — Telephone (03) 5461 1833 — Fax (03) 5461 1815
E mail: highview@highview.vic.edu.au — Internet: www.highview.vic.edu.au

I write to express my concerns over three issues in the Schools Assistance Bill 2008:

- the requirement of all schools to teach a national curriculum without any guarantee that alternative curricula currently used can be maintained
- the requirement that schools report all funding sources
- the Education Minister's right to deny a school funding when it has a qualified audit

These 3 issues are of concern as they will impact on my school, the parents and the programs on offer. A national curriculum without any flexibility indicates Highview could not continue to operate our effective STING (Community Service) and FOCUS (Pastoral Care) programs, our innovative Year 9 STRIVE program and our extensive Religious Education programs. Our Learning Support Programs in Years 7 and 8 would also be affected as we would not have the flexibility to withdraw them from LOTE classes in order to receive additional support in Literacy and Numeracy.

The danger of schools having to release their funding sources and financial details is that the media and individuals could misinterpret the data and use it for purposes other than those it is intended for. Independent schools such as Highview are required to provide their own capital for building projects. The generation of funds for maintenance of infrastructure and capital development is an essential part of the budgeting process.

I do not believe the Education Minister should have the power to withhold a school's funding, simply because it has a qualified audit, which could be for a variety of reasons. This would have an enormous impact on our College operations. As the majority of our families live in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, our fees are low. We would therefore be unable to continue to operate without the government funding.

I request the Federal Government amends the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 to address the 3 issues of concern I have raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs. Julie Baud
PRINCIPAL
HIGHVIEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE