



**INTER-CHURCH COMMISSION
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (NSW) Inc**

PO Box 756 NEWCASTLE 2300

Phone 02 4979 1335

Email execofficer@iccoreis.asn.au

Media Release 31/01/2017

FIRIS up to its usual tricks at the start of a new school year

It is no surprise that once again at the start of a school year, Ms Joanne McCarthy and the poorly named Fairness in Religion in Schools (FIRIS) have produced another negative media article full of inaccurate innuendo regarding Special Religious Education (SRE) in NSW. FIRIS are not about fairness in religion in schools; they are about atheism and the removal of choice to fit in with their world view. Their position is inconsistent with the values of a multicultural, multi-faith society.

It is ludicrous for FIRIS to call for a blanket suspension of SRE, citing a single example from one curriculum based on a review done in Queensland, which does not have the same rigorous curriculum development or volunteer training processes required of providers of SRE in NSW. The minority opponents of SRE will use any methods and misinformation to remove from all families the choice to have faith-based teaching for their children in public schools.

Claims that the minister has no oversight or final approval of what is taught as part of SRE Curriculums are nonsense. The minister can monitor and manage these curriculums via the SRE consultative committee which meets quarterly or via direct contact with providers at any time. Curriculum content strands are made available publicly online as per annual approval requirements for all providers. Students are formed in the faith of their families by trained teachers using approved curriculums.

We look forward to working closely with the new Education Minister, Rob Stokes, and the release of the review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics. The Inter Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) has been eagerly awaiting its release for over 12 months. Providers were very eager to participate in this process and did so with openness of our screening and training processes for volunteers and our curriculums.

ICCOREIS is confident that the Review of SRE and Ethics will recognise the significant contribution that we and other providers across all faith traditions make to public education. We expect that there will be much to celebrate coming out of the Review and that there will also be things that individual providers need to attend to. We look forward to continuing to do so in an ongoing way to ensure that SRE provides for NSW, the best practice for delivery of faith and values education in our pluralist society.

At the celebration of SRE held at Parliament House in October 2016, over 400 people from all faith traditions were joined by 30 NSW MPs to mark the amazing contribution SRE providers make to NSW public schools. It was wonderful at that time to have such overwhelming statements of support for SRE from the Government and Opposition.

Mr Jude Hennessy
ICCOREIS Board Member
Media Liaison

Representing the dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia from the Province of NSW, the dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church in NSW, the Uniting Church in Australia NSW Synod, the Baptist Union of NSW, the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of NSW, the Churches of Christ in NSW, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, the Lutheran Church of Australia NSW District, The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory, the Fellowship of Congregational Churches, the Assemblies of God in NSW, the Christian Brethren Assemblies in NSW, the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand - NSW and ACT Deaneries.