

LCA Support for Government Schools

Reason for statement:

This is a public statement of support for public schooling at a time when the media has concentrated on highlighting deficiencies in government schools.

The statement is a confession that as a church we in good conscience operate our own schools and at the same time support government schools. For us there is no conflict.

It is a challenge to our people and congregations that they take advantage of the opportunity to be 'salt' and 'light' in these schools.

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) thanks God for the gift of schools and schooling in our country.

Schooling in Australia, both the government and non-government sectors, reflects the diversity that is contemporary Australia and offers parents choice. We affirm and support the role that each sector plays.

Whilst the LCA owns and operates schools and early childhood centres across Australia this is not to be understood as a vote of no-confidence in government schools. Rather, these schools are established as part of our concern for the holistic nurture of our children and for the mission of the church.

We note that some Lutheran students attend Lutheran schools. Some attend other non-government schools whilst the majority attend government schools, either by choice or of necessity. We recognise that government schools exist in many places where other schools cannot exist, providing education for children in rural and isolated areas and for those with special needs.

We affirm all teachers in government schools and we appreciate the quality teaching that produces happy, educated young people. We recognise those Lutherans who teach and work in government schools and the service they give to our land. We recognise the important role that Christians have in these schools, as God's visible hands of healing, helping and stabilising a fractured world.

We encourage Lutheran parents and friends to take an active role in the wellbeing of their local government schools, and to contribute to their life and administration wherever possible.

We urge congregations of the Church to

- encourage parents to actively support their children's school community
- be involved in religious education in government schools where possible as a matter of priority
- assist in the provision of chaplaincy services
- generally be proactive in their support of the schools as vital contributors to the wellbeing of the wider community.

We encourage governments (Commonwealth and State) to continue support of government schools, recognising that any lessening of support will have long-term effects. We encourage them to increase their support of chaplaincy and welfare staff in government schools.

The LCA promises to support government schools. We offer and encourage cooperation, with government authorities and Lutheran authorities working together to share experiences and to express common concern for the wellbeing and nurture of children in government schools. We further encourage the common use of resources wherever applicable.

We encourage our congregations to support government schools by using the opportunities provided to participate in religious education and chaplaincy. The volunteer work by our people in these schools is affirmed and encouraged.

Above all, we urge all to work for the promotion of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of government schools, recognising their vital significance and the important part that parents, guardians, church and state play in this regard.