

Jack Hunter

From: [REDACTED]@ucaqld.com.au
Sent: Friday, 21 August 2020 2:51 PM
To: Education
Cc: Kellie Broderick
Subject: Follup letter regarding request to meet with Minister Grace re RI in State Schools
Attachments: RI Follow-up Letter to Minister Grace Gracesigned.docx

Categories: Molly actioning

kind regards

[REDACTED]

Moderator



Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD
Moderator

[REDACTED]

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Released under the RTI Act by DoE



18 August 2020

The Honourable Grace Grace
Minister for Education
via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Election Commitment Request Follow-up

Dear Minister Grace

We wrote to you on 24 June 2020 seeking the following:

Request of the ALP for its position for the 2020 State Election –

The Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld Network in partnership with the Christian RI Alliance in Queensland seek the commitment and support of the Australian Labor Party (Queensland) for:

- 1 *Maintaining* the current status of *Religious Instruction in curriculum time* in Queensland state schools throughout the remainder of this Parliamentary term and the next Parliamentary term and particularly should the ALP form government after the 31 October 2020 election.
- 2 *Ensuring* the continuation of a mechanism of ongoing consultative engagement and quality advancement, between the multiple faiths and the Department of Education. Currently this engagement is through a forum known as the Religious Instruction Quality Assurance (RIQA) advisory committee under its current charter.
- 3 *Advancing*, as a matter of urgency, implementation of the new revised and agreed Application for Student Enrolment Form, Department of Education. This new Enrolment Form includes a revised RI section which is critical to clarity and access for informed parent choice/consent of RI.
- 4 A policy ensuring that at the start of each school year schools distribute the agreed information for parents about current RI options at the school available in the first year level that RI is offered, this usually being Year 1.

In the absence of a reply, we now seek an urgent meeting with you before the end of the month (August). Unfortunately, we are beginning to draw the conclusion that your silence on this matter implies your lack of support for these four commitments.

Yours sincerely

s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area of the letter.

Joint Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network (Queensland)

Jack Hunter

From: [REDACTED]@ucaqld.com.au
Sent: Tuesday, 29 September 2020 3:45 PM
To: Education
Subject: Religious Instruction Election Commitment
Attachments: RI Response to Minister for Education 29-9-20.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: Actioned

Dear Minister

Please find attached, a letter dated today, for your attention.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

Moderator



Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD
Moderator

[REDACTED]

@ucaqld.com.au

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29 September 2020

The Honourable Grace Grace
Minister for Education
via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Religious Instruction Election Commitment

Dear Minister

Thank you for your response of 23 September 2020 to our request of 24 June for an election commitment on Religious Instruction (RI) in state schools, as set out below. We appreciate that this is a very busy time in the electoral cycle and value your response.

As you will recall we requested a four-part election commitment regarding RI for the duration of the next term of Government in the event that the Labor Government was returned to office at the 31 October 2020 State election.

We thank you for your assurances about RIQA, and of continued support for parent and carers having access to information on RI options available at school at the start of the school year.

We respectfully wish to raise our concerns about certain other parts of your response.

In Curriculum Time

1 *Maintaining* the current status of *Religious Instruction in curriculum time* in Queensland state schools throughout the remainder of this Parliamentary term and the next Parliamentary term and particularly should the ALP form government after the 31 October 2020 election.

In the penultimate paragraph of your response it is stated that '... the Palaszczuk Government has no plans to amend the current RI provisions in the Education Act'. We thank you for that assurance. Could you confirm that this statement includes *in curriculum time*? Could you also confirm that this statement applies *for the next Parliamentary term* if Labor wins Government? These matters are of immense importance to the RI sector.

Consultative mechanism - RIQA

2 *Ensuring* the continuation of a mechanism of ongoing consultative engagement and quality advancement, between the multiple faiths and the Department of Education. Currently this engagement is through a forum known as the Religious Instruction Quality Assurance (RIQA) advisory committee under its current charter.

Thank you for your response and assurance that 'a re-elected Palaszczuk Government would continue this important and constructive engagement with the multi-faiths groups through RIQA'

Improved Parent choice section of Enrolment Form

3 *Advancing*, as a matter of urgency, implementation of the new revised and agreed Application for Student Enrolment Form, Department of Education. This new Enrolment Form includes a revised RI section which is critical to clarity and access for informed parent choice/consent of RI.

As you know representatives of the Multi-Faiths RI Network and RIQA members have been having ongoing and amicable discussions with senior officers of the Education Department over the last 18 months to streamline the administration of the delivery of RI at schools, hence alleviating significantly the workload pressures of staff at the school level.

Additionally, those discussions have also developed agreed documentation that refines and improves the availability of information for parents about currently-available RI options and how a parent's choice of RI for their student can be given full effect at the school level.

In this regard a revised section in the Application for student enrolment form has been agreed by senior officers of the Department and RIQA that clarifies the choice of faith options for parents. As of early March this year we were advised by the Department that the new Application for student enrolment form would be published in mid-late March, making available to parents the revised RI section thus greatly assisting them when making their choice of RI. We were advised that with the onset of COVID 19 the new Application for student enrolment form would not be implemented 'at this time'. We fully appreciate and understand the decision made at that time.

Unfortunately, your response is silent about the timing of implementation of the Application form and the revised parent choice section. Could you please clarify whether a re-elected Labor Government would as a matter of urgency implement the new Application form and the section providing parent choice of RI?

Information for parents on RI options at school

4 A policy ensuring that at the start of each school year schools distribute the agreed information for parents about current RI options at the school available in the first year level that RI is offered, this usually being Year 1.

Your response notes that 'at the start of each school year schools are expected to communicate information about RI programs available at their school to parents and carers'. Thank you for your assurance 'that there are no plans to change this under a re-elected Palaszczuk Government'.

In the current circumstances, we would appreciate clarification of the above points as a matter of high priority. In the meantime we will continue to engage positively with your representatives around our concerns.

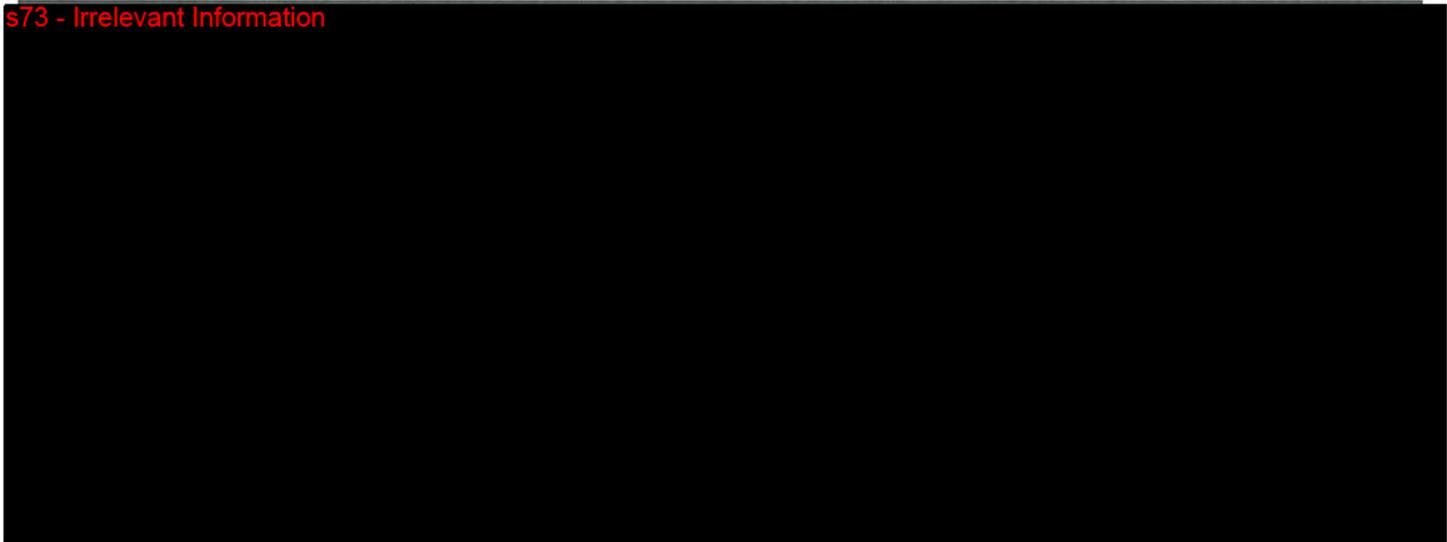
Your sincerely

s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest

For and on behalf of **s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest**
Joint Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network (Queensland)

Jack Hunter

s73 - Irrelevant Information



On 22 Mar 2020, at 7:09 pm, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@christianri.org.au> wrote:

Hon Grace Grace MP
Queensland Minister for Education

Dear Minister

We wish to advise that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body is recommending to all RRI instructors the immediate temporary suspension of Religious Instruction from Queensland State schools until further notice.

Attached is a Media Release to this effect.

Our thoughts are with you and other key decision makers in these deeply challenging times.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

On behalf of [REDACTED]
Co-Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network



[REDACTED] CEO

E: ceo@christianri.org.au | W: <https://christianri.org.au>



<MEDIA RELEASE MULTI-FAITHS PEAK BODY 22-3-2020.docx>

Jack Hunter

From: [REDACTED] <ceo@christianri.org.au>
Sent: Sunday, 22 March 2020 7:09 PM
To: Education
Cc: Angela Kitzelman; [REDACTED]
Subject: Attention: Ms Angela Kitzelman
Attachments: MEDIA RELEASE MULTI-FAITHS PEAK BODY 22-3-2020.docx

Categories: Actioned
Memo: M22384

Hon Grace Grace MP
Queensland Minister for Education

Dear Minister

We wish to advise that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body is recommending to all RI Instructors the immediate temporary suspension of Religious Instruction from Queensland State schools until further notice.

Attached is a Media Release to this effect.

Our thoughts are with you and other key decision makers in these deeply challenging times.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
On behalf of [REDACTED]
Co-Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network



[REDACTED]

CEO

E: ceo@christianri.org.au | W: <https://christianri.org.au>



MEDIA RELEASE

6:45pm, 22 March 2020

START

MULTI-FAITHS PEAK BODY ANNOUNCES THE TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION FROM QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS

The Multi-Faiths Peak Body for Religious Instruction (RI) in Queensland state schools has strongly recommended to its Instructors the immediate suspension of Religious Instruction from state schools until further notice.

Venerable Tseten, Co-Chair of the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body and President of Buddhist Education in State Schools states, "The safety and wellbeing of students, parents and the broader school community is always the first the priority of the providers of RI in Queensland state schools. We have therefore decided that it is in the best interests of everyone that our approximately 3,500 volunteer Instructors temporarily suspend the delivery of RI from the 750 state schools where RI is on offer during the coronavirus pandemic".

Rev David Baker, Co-Chair of the Multi-Faiths Peak Body and Moderator of the Uniting Church Queensland Synod states, "The majority of Queensland primary schools welcome the positive role that RI can play in school communities, especially at a time such as now. However, the providers of RI believe that it is in the best interests of everyone that RI is temporarily suspended. We look forward to supporting parents and local schools by making RI available again, when it is safe to do so."

Every endeavour will be made to urgently communicate this important information to all providers of RI throughout the state.

END

Media enquiries can be directed to Rev David Baker, Co-Chair of the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld through James O'Callaghan s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest [@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:ucqld.com.au)

Hayley Lockyer

Not of reasonable concern

From: [REDACTED] <ceo@christianri.org.au>
Date: 28 August 2020 at 11:24:40 am AEST
To: Angela Kitzelman <Angela.Kitzelman@ministerial.qld.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ucaqld.com.au, [REDACTED]
Subject: Urgent meeting request

Hi Angela

It seems like a life-time ago that we met in person. I hope you are doing well through these times.

Attached is a letter we (the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Network) sent to Minister Grace Grace on 24 June asking for a commitment to RI through the next term of government. There was no reply so we sent the follow-up letter on 18 August, also attached. Again there has been no reply. We requested the same commitments from the LNP and KUP which have been given.

[REDACTED] Co-Chairs of the MFRIPB, and myself request an urgent meeting with Minister Grace Grace to discuss the commitments requested in these letters.

Warm regards

[REDACTED]

Christian RI

[REDACTED] | CEO

E: ceo@christianri.org.au | W: <https://christianri.org.au>





Multi-Faiths RI

24 June 2020

The Honourable Grace Grace
Minister for Education
via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Election Commitment Request

Dear Minister Grace

Thank you for the previous public commitments of both yourself and the Premier that the Government has "no plans to change the current policy on Religious Instruction" or the way that RI is currently delivered.

As you are aware, Religious Instruction (RI) has been part of the education of Queensland children and young people in state schools since the early 1900s, and is included in Chapter 5, Section 76 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and Part 5, Section 26 of the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017.

Queensland state schools embrace a multitude of cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs and encourage students to grow and develop as a whole person, in particular, in beliefs, values and attitudes (<https://education.qld.gov.au/parents-and-carers/school-information/school-operations/policy-statement>).

Increasingly, Religious Instruction is conducted by numerous faith groups, reflective of the growing multiculturalism in Queensland society, including the members of the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld Network: Baha'i RI, Buddhist RI, Jewish RI and Islamic RI and 14 Christian RI denominations and independent networks of churches, who all work cooperatively to offer non-denominational Christian RI.

A multicultural state is, inevitably, a multi-faiths state, since the two are inexorably entwined. In a multicultural society, that which shapes values, attitudes and beliefs for many is inclusiveness of their faith/religion. The role of Religious Instruction is to provide to children and young people, by parental consent, the opportunity to explore the faith of their choosing, and have this exploration inform their values, attitudes and beliefs.

Request of the ALP for its position for the 2020 State Election –

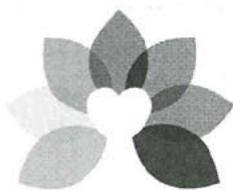
The Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld Network in partnership with the Christian RI Alliance in Queensland seek the commitment and support of the Australian Labor Party (Queensland) for:

- 1 *Maintaining* the current status of *Religious Instruction in curriculum time* in Queensland state schools throughout the remainder of this Parliamentary term and the next Parliamentary term and particularly should the ALP form government after the 31 October 2020 election.
- 2 *Ensuring* the continuation of a mechanism of ongoing consultative engagement and quality advancement, between the multiple faiths and the Department of Education. Currently this engagement is through a forum known as the Religious Instruction Quality Assurance (RIQA) advisory committee under its current charter.
- 3 *Advancing*, as a matter of urgency, implementation of the new revised and agreed Application for Student Enrolment Form, Department of Education. This new Enrolment Form includes a revised RI section which is critical to clarity and access for informed parent choice/consent of RI.
- 4 A policy ensuring that at the start of each school year schools distribute the agreed information for parents about current RI options at the school available in the first year level that RI is offered, this usually being Year 1.

Enclosed is a Background Paper that demonstrates the advancement of the RI sector in Queensland

s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest

Joint Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network (Queensland)



Multi-Faiths RI

Background Paper on Religious Instruction in Queensland

June 2020

RI is offered almost exclusively to Primary school students in Years 1-6, typically in a weekly 30-minute lesson *in curriculum time* by trained instructors authorised by their Faith group, approved by the local school Principal including mandatory school training (primarily student protection, privacy, Health and Safety and Code of Conduct training), and teaching an authorised curricula.

A major review of RI curricula is currently underway under the supervision of an Associate Professor of Education from QUT. Two of the main curricula in use have already been reviewed and the review of a further two curricula is about to be publicly released.

According to Department of Education 2020 data obtained through administrative access (Manage Student Details > Enrolment Details section in OneSchool), there is currently 175,000 students with consent into RI. However, given that the Department of Education has acknowledged that 'records about RI may be retained by schools in other OneSchool modules, using other software, or using manual records', the actual number of students with consent to be in RI is higher than 175,000.

Forming of an RI Peak Body for the Sector

In December 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding in support of RI was signed by the major faith groups participating in RI: Baha'i RI, Buddhist RI, Jewish RI and Islamic RI and 14 Christian RI denominations and independent networks of churches.

In 2019, the Multi-Faiths RI Qld Peak Body Network was formed, electing s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest Moderator of the Uniting Church Australia in Queensland, and s47(3)(b) - Contrary to the Public Interest Chair of the Buddhist Education Services, as founding Co-Chairs.

In 2019, the major Christian denominations (14 in total) formed the Christian RI Alliance in Queensland to support and enhance Christian RI in our State. The Christian RI Alliance works in close partnership with the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body to advance the RI sector.

The key objective of both these non-partisan organisations is the implementation of a suite of best practice standards and accreditation pathway for the RI sector.

Significant Advancement of the Sector

In late 2018 and during 2019 several meetings were held with the Minister for Education and the Opposition Shadow Spokesperson for Education to brief them on the significant developments currently occurring and projected for the RI sector. The RI sector is grateful for the bipartisan public support they have provided for the continuation of RI in state schools in curriculum time as part of a holistic and inclusive state education system.

In furtherance of RI, in 2019 a series of meetings with senior officers in the Department of Education with representatives of the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Network Qld and the Christian RI Alliance were able to achieve unanimous agreement on a significant range of initiatives, most notable was the revised RI section of the Department's *Application for student enrolment form*. This revised Form was set down for implementation in mid-March 2020, but due to COVID-19 has been delayed indefinitely. In order to assist parents to make an informed decision in relation to RI and to have clarity about the available RI options at their local school, the Sector strongly prefers this new form be implemented in readiness for the peak 2021 enrolment season in Term 3 2020.

The RI sector continues to advance a range of other improvements designed to reduce the RI related workload of administrative staff and Principals.

In 2020, the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Network in partnership with the Christian RI Alliance have designed an Accreditation Pathway for all faith RI Instructors (some 3,500 instructors). In addition, the RI Sector has commenced drafting Sector Standards which are planned to be progressively implemented, across the State, starting the second half of 2020.

In March 2020, because of COVID-19, the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Network on behalf of the sector voluntarily placed 'on hold' the provision of RI in state schools. On Friday 29 May 2020 the Department of Education announced the resumption of RI across the state. As an RI Sector we have developed a COVID-Safe Plan that is designed to work in conjunction with Department of Education COVID- Safe requirements, to advance the safe resumption of RI.

“Giving children and young people the opportunity to explore faith and values within their school education.”

For further information, please contact:

Name	Organisation	Mobile No.	Email Address
[REDACTED]	Co-Chair, Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld Network	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]@ucaqld.com.au
[REDACTED]	Co-Chair, Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Qld Network	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	CEO, Christian RI Alliance Qld	[REDACTED]	ceo@christianri.org.au



18 August 2020

The Honourable Grace Grace
Minister for Education
via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Election Commitment Request Follow-up

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In the absence of a reply, we now seek an urgent meeting with you before the end of the month (August). Unfortunately, we are beginning to draw the conclusion that your silence on this matter implies your lack of support for these four commitments.

Yours sincerely

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Joint Chairs, Multi-Faiths Religious Instruction Peak Body Network (Queensland)