

# GUIDELINES

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Responsibility of: School Support Services  
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Target Audience: School Staff/Parents/Community

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This document should be read in conjunction with the **Religious Instruction policy**.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide advice to schools to ensure legislative and departmental requirements are met when providing Religious Instruction. They include:

- a process for commencing provision of Religious Instruction in government schools
- provision of Religious Instruction
- suspending or discontinuing Religious Instruction programs
- managing appeals.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

**Appropriate alternative program** is a program or activity that is offered to students who do not opt in to Religious Instruction and that does not educationally disadvantage students attending Religious Instruction.

**Parent** signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

**Proselytising** is converting or attempting to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another.

**Religion** is a set of beliefs and practices, usually involving acknowledgment of a divine or higher being or power, by which people order the conduct of their lives practically and morally.

**Religious entity** is an organisation or institution that meets the [Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups](#) (ASCRG), 1996.

**Religious Instruction** relates to a specific religion, as distinct from the general study of a variety of different religions, delivered by a Religious Instructor.

**Religious instructor** is a person nominated and authorised by a religious entity to provide Religious Instruction in that religion.

**Student**, for the purposes of this document, includes any person enrolled in a Northern Territory government school.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Principals** will ensure that:

- the approval process for Religious Instruction programs is non-discriminatory and equitably applied to all religions
- where a School Representative Body functions within a school community, it is engaged in the decision-making process for delivery of Religious Instruction
- written parental advice that a student may participate in Religious Instruction is granted prior to the Religious Instructor engaging with the student and his/her details
- appropriate records of student participation are retained, including parental notice of student participation and student attendance
- program content and materials are reviewed with Religious Instruction providers prior to the initial approval of Religious Instruction and then each Term
- a registered teacher is present at all times during Religious Instruction
- Religious Instructors are provided with copies of this policy and related guidelines and the school's Code of Conduct
- Religious Instructors provide Religious Instruction in their nominated religion and do not engage in any other activities at the school, including those related to chaplaincy and student wellbeing
- where a student's attendance at Religious Instruction is discontinued, this information is communicated to relevant classroom teachers and Religious Instructors.

**Teachers** will ensure that:

- students display appropriate classroom behaviour during Religious Instruction classes
- Religious Instruction materials are not accessible to non-participating students.

**Religious Instructors** will:

- provide, for the principal to sight and copy to school records:
  - at their own expense, a valid Working with Children Clearance Notice (Ochre Card)
  - formal evidence that they are recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution to deliver Religious Instruction in the nominated religion
- provide Religious Instruction programs for review with the principal prior to the initial approval of Religious Instruction and then at the end of each Term
- ensure that Religious Instruction does not extend to proselytising
- ensure that Religious Instruction materials are not accessible to non-participating students
- comply with this policy and related guidelines, the school's Code of Conduct and mandatory reporting requirements.

**Parents** will:

- make a written request to the principal of a school where Religious Instruction programs are not provided if they would like to request Religious Instruction for their child
- provide written advice to the school regarding their child's participation in Religious Instruction where a suitable program is provided
- assume responsibility for notifying the school as soon as possible if they choose to withdraw consent for their child to participate in Religious Instruction.

## **4. GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES**

### **4.1 Student participation where Religious Instruction is already provided**

Where a school already provides Religious Instruction, students enrolled in the school may participate in a specific Religious Instruction program if a parent has provided written advice and has been fully informed:

- of the program and its content
- that the program is not part of the school curriculum
- of appropriate alternative activities available if the student does not participate.

A sample parental advice form is provided at Attachment A.

### **4.2 Processing a request for the provision of Religious Instruction**

A parent may request provision of Religious Instruction for their child/children at a school where it is not already delivered. The principal may approve the request with consideration of the following.

- a) The school must have the ability to provide appropriate resources, including:
  - designated learning space/s
  - specific time allocations
  - teacher supervision.
- b) An appropriate religious entity must be available to deliver the requested Religious Instruction, and the entity must have the ability to provide a suitably qualified Religious Instructor.
- c) A suitable Religious Instruction program, that includes related and appropriate materials, must be available. Program and materials must be reviewed prior to the approval of Religious Instruction and then at the end of each Term, ensuring ongoing appropriateness of content.
- d) If Religious Instruction is going to be provided during class time, the school must have the ability to provide appropriate alternative programs for students who are not participating. Such programs must not educationally disadvantage students attending Religious Instruction.
- e) If Religious Instruction is being provided to children enrolled in preschool, the ratio and qualification requirements prescribed in the *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act* and Education and Care Services National Regulations must be upheld.

Where a principal determines that adequate resources and provisions exist to warrant the inclusion of Religious Instruction in the school's program, the principal may proceed with making appropriate arrangements to facilitate the request. The requesting parent must

provide written advice that the student may participate in the Religious Instruction program. A sample parental advice form is provided at Attachment A.

Where the principal determines that there are insufficient resources and provisions to warrant the inclusion of the Religious Instruction in the school's program, written advice must be provided to the requesting parent. This advice must note the reasons for the decision, the means for appeal, and a copy of the department's policies and guidelines for Religious Instruction, and Complaints.

### 4.3 General Information

Student information is confidential and Religious Instructors should only be provided with the relevant details of students who have opted to participate in that particular Religious Instruction program. This includes any special information, such as additional needs which may affect the behaviour or engagement of the student.

Where the number of students involved in Religious Instruction is small, provision can be made for Religious Instruction to be provided at some suitable time when formal teaching is not scheduled.

Complaints about teaching methodology and content should be raised in the first instance with the principal who may decide to refer to the religious entity that has authorised the individual instructor.

A parent may contact the school to withdraw their child from a Religious Instruction program at any time.

### 4.4 Suspending or discontinuing Religious Instruction programs

A principal may temporarily suspend or otherwise discontinue Religious Instruction where the circumstances of a school change such that a principal considers continued Religious Instruction either inappropriate or impractical. Reasons may be related to school resourcing, or ongoing difficulties with the availability or regular attendance of instructors.

The principal must provide written advice to parents, Religious Instructor(s) and the religious entity regarding the reasons for the decision and the means for appeal.

### 4.5 Appeals

Principals are able to make decisions in relation to the provision of Religious Instruction in their school as a delegate of the Chief Executive; however, the Chief Executive reserves the right to review decisions made by principals.

A principal's decision in relation to the provision of Religious Instruction in their school may be appealed in accordance with the following:

- a parent who is not satisfied with a decision made by a principal may appeal that decision
- that parent must first request in writing that the principal review the decision, clearly specifying the grounds and reasons for the request

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- on receipt of a written request, the principal must consult with the parent making the request. Following a subsequent review of the original decision, the principal must then advise the party of the further decision and the reasons for this decision.

The decision of the principal will remain in force until such time as it may be varied by an appeal.

Where the person requesting the review is not satisfied with the outcome of that review, they may make a complaint in line with the department's [Complaints policy and guidelines](#).

**Religious Instruction  
Parental Advice Form**

Student Details	
Student's Family Name:	Student's Given Names:
Student's Date of Birth:	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Parent/Caregiver's Name:	Parent/Caregiver's Contact Phone: Email:
General Information	
<p>Religious education is provided at your child's school by [religious entity]. The program includes [insert program content]. This program is not part of the school curriculum. Students who do not opt-in will be engaged in [insert appropriate alternative program].</p> <p>Written parental advice regarding your child's participation in Religious Instruction is required for your child to participate in Religious Instruction classes, and for your child to discontinue classes.</p> <p>Religious Instruction is delivered by persons who are endorsed by a religious entity to provide Religious Instruction in the nominated religion, and who have obtained a <i>Working with Children Clearance Notice (Ochre Card)</i>.</p> <p>Please complete either Section A or B below.</p>	
A. Parental Approval for Student to Opt-In	
Permission is given to attend Religious Instruction classes. <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
B. Parental Notice for Student to Discontinue	
My child's attendance at Religious Instruction is to discontinue from this date: _____	
Parent Signature	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>.....</p> <p><i>Parent/Caregiver's Name</i></p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>.....</p> <p><i>Parent/Caregiver's Signature</i></p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>...../...../.....</p> <p><i>Date</i></p> </div> </div>	