

## THE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC: MEDIA RELEASE



### STATES SHOULD FOLLOW ACT'S LEAD AND BAN RELIGIOUS CHAPLAINS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Meg Wallace, PhD, president of the Rationalist Assn of NSW, said today that denials that religious chaplains in public schools across Australia do not proselytise is easily refuted.

“For a start, here is an image from a Scripture Union Queensland T-shirt worn by a chaplain. How is the image of a Christian cross displayed in this way, *not* a form of not-so-subtle



proselytism? The text on the t-shirt reads ‘bringing hope to a young generation’. Scripture Union Queensland’s website says it is a ‘Christian organisation seeking to bring God’s love, hope and good news to children, young people and their families.’

It is a reasonable inference that the ‘hope’ they are talking about is their belief in Christian salvation.

Second, many religious have damned themselves out of their own mouths.

Access Ministries, Victoria’s largest chaplaincy provider, stated of chaplains in 2008 that ‘We must go and make disciples ... what *really* matters is seizing the God-given opportunity we have to reach kids in schools.’ (Emphasis in original).

More recently, Generate Ministries in NSW has a ‘faith building’ course offered to students, and stated that the school’s chaplain is a way to facilitate their joining the course. (*Sydney Morning Herald* 24 September 2018).

Meg Wallace said it is no surprise that religious chaplains in Australian public schools would see their appointment as part of their ‘mission’. She points out the World Council of Churches has stated that ‘true evangelism’ is central to ‘the very being of the church’ and a ‘responsibility of every Christian and every church’.

Pope Francis has described the transmission of faith as ‘the heart of the Church’s mission.’

Given evangelism is their central motivation, can chaplains really be believed when they promise not to proselytise or influence a school child, when the opportunity presents itself, with no witnesses present?”

Meg Wallace concluded that Australian states should follow the ACT’s lead and begin to replace religious chaplains with qualified counsellors. ‘There should be no covert religious agendas in our secular public schools.’

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