



14 November 2023 – For Immediate Release

The Importance of Religious Schools Recognised

Christian Schools welcomed the launch of the **Parliamentary Friends of Religious Schools and Faith Communities** in Canberra on Monday, providing an opportunity for Parliamentarians across all political parties to gather and discuss issues of importance to the fastest growing segment of the education sector.

ALP Senator Deborah O'Neill and Liberal MP Mr Julian Leaser are co-chairs of the group which welcomed leaders of Anglican, Catholic, Christian, Islamic, Lutheran and Jewish schooling sectors, as well as representatives from a range of faith communities.

Speakers at the launch spoke of the long history of faith communities involved in the provision of education in Australia, as far back as 1793 when the first Christian school was founded soon after colonisation <https://celebratechristianschools.au/>. The long commitment of the Catholic church establishing and maintaining parish schools around the country, and the rapid growth in recent decades of Christian schools and, more recently, Islamic schools was recognised.

Attendees, both Parliamentarians and faith leaders, expressed appreciation for the establishment of the group and indicated a strong desire for further opportunities to meet and discuss the opportunities for faith-based schools and the challenges they face.

ENDS

Comments attributed to Vanessa Cheng, Executive Officer, Australian Association of Christian Schools –

"As a mother of five children who have benefitted from Christian schooling, I've seen first-hand the love, care and commitment teachers and staff in a Christian education, an education that supports the values of our family."

Comments attributed to Alistair Macpherson, Executive Director, Public Policy and Advocacy Associated Christian Schools –

"Parents should be able to choose an education for their children that reflects their beliefs and values, therefore it is vital that MPs from across the political spectrum support this fundamental freedom."

Comments attributed to Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy, Christian Schools Australia –

"The commitment to student-focussed, sector-blind, needs based funding by successive Australian Governments has allowed parents who could not otherwise afford a faith-based school genuine choice in education. This strong bi-partisan commitment must be maintained."

For all media enquiries:

Vanessa Cheng, Australian Association of Christian Schools, 0416 244 372

Alistair Macpherson, Associated Christian Schools, 0401 365 776

Mark Spencer, Christian Schools Australia, 0419 419 224