

MEDIA RELEASE

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Attack on faith-based schools' science teaching set to become an SA election issue

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) today called on all South Australian political parties to affirm their commitment to supporting the freedom of faith-based schools to reflect their faith with minimum interference, while maintaining high educational standards.

ACL SA/Victorian Director Rob Ward said that a new science teaching policy recently published by the SA Non Government Schools Registration Board appears to be trying to prevent intelligent design or creationism from being taught alongside the mandatory requirement to study evolution in non-government schools.

"This new policy – which appears to be far more restrictive than that of other states – has been brought in without any genuine consultation with affected school organisations, and disappointingly seems to have the support of the SA Government. It is set to become a key issue for many Christians in the upcoming election," Mr Ward said.

He said that the Board's move stands to defeat the intention of parents in sending their children to schools in South Australia that are faith-based.

"The Board has a mandate to ensure that non-government schools, whether faith-based or not, hold high educational standards, cover agreed areas of teaching in the curriculum and have adequate financial structures, but they should not be forcing on these schools an ideology that has nothing to do with quality of education, but more to do with limiting the freedom of a faith-based school to be just that, faith-based," Mr Ward said.

"The recently published policy of the Board that seems to deny even a reference to sacred texts in the science classroom has been applied in a roughshod manner, with one school even being told to remove a poster that displayed the Bible account of creation.

"One wonders if the Board will next follow the European Court example where Italian schools were originally told to remove crucifixes from their walls?" Mr Ward queried (this move has since been overturned on appeal).

"South Australia has an inclusive and broadly based school system where Government and non-government schools together provide educational services to the whole community. We are seeking a commitment for this new science teaching policy to be overturned to allow that co-operative approach to education to continue."

Media Contact: Rob Ward on 0408 348 352 or Glynis Quinlan on 0408 875 979.