

Better future for Scripture in Schools

A new taskforce has been set up to keep the teaching standards of Special Religious Education (SRE) or “Scripture” in NSW schools up-to-date. From this year, all 107 providers of SRE across New South Wales schools will be certified under a new programme developed by a joint committee of all faith providers in conjunction with the NSW Department of Education.

The programme, called “Better Balanced Futures” (BBF), is a response to the NSW Government’s review of SRE and Special Education in Ethics and marks the first time in Australia that such a wide range of providers have formed policies together. It will mean higher standards for SRE.

Chair of All Faiths Special Religious Education, Rachele Schonberger, says BBF will raise the standards of SRE while promoting values consistent with the beliefs of parents. “The new certification process makes it possible for all groups to have objective standards with processes, providing assurance to parents, students, schools and communities as to providers’ ability to deliver high quality SRE,” she explained.

“Parents have the right to choose to ensure their children are taught according to their faith beliefs, and there are over 20 different faith groups teaching SRE in NSW.”

The All Faiths group, formed in May 2017, embodies the 107 Special Religious Education (SRE) providers in NSW representing the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha’i, Vedic, Sikh, Catholic and other Christian groups teaching in approximately 92 per cent of primary schools and 81 per cent of secondary schools. This equates to more than four hundred thousand children.

The new initiative, BBF, is a response to all 16 recommendations made by a Legislative Council committee review of SRE. BBF policies and procedures were written for teacher audits, complaints policies and procedures, teacher authorisation processes and teacher training manuals, among others.

BBF is about better training and curriculum standards that will equip our children for a more certain future by teaching positive values that provide a solid foundation and balance.