



**SENATOR THE HON SCOTT RYAN  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

Our Ref MC14-001494

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jensen,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2014 to the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education, concerning a petition for the maintenance of school chaplaincy funding. As the matter you have raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, your letter was referred to me for response.

The Government acknowledges the valuable contribution school chaplains make to the wellbeing of our school communities and the tremendous commitment of school chaplains who support thousands of students and families across Australia.

The current National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program aims to support school communities that wish to access the services of a school chaplain or student welfare worker. It is a voluntary programme that assists school communities to support the wellbeing of their students, including strengthening values and providing greater pastoral care.

The school chaplaincy programme was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2006. Since 2007, a total of \$429.8 million has been allocated to the chaplaincy programme, providing support to approximately 3800 participating government and non-government schools nationwide.

The previous government did not allocate funding to the programme beyond 2014. The Government is currently giving consideration to the future of the programme and its funding.

In regards to the current High Court challenge to the programme, the Government is preparing its defence in this matter. In the meantime, chaplaincy services are continuing to be provided under the programme in schools across Australia.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely,

SCOTT RYAN//

// March 2014