

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This petition of citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the fact that s.116 of the Australian Constitution prevents Parliament from making any law establishing any religion. However, in the 1981 Defence of Government Schools case the High Court said s.116 does not mean separation of church and state, but prohibits government from establishing a national state religion. Over thirty years have elapsed since that case. As recognised in the federal government's Gonski report, critical inequalities between public and many private schools have developed; Australia's multiculturalism has become more diverse; community values systems are more complex.

We therefore ask the House to legislate for separation of church and state in Australia in keeping with the changing values of contemporary Australians. We request: legislation that prohibits (1) government establishing *any* religion, not just a national religion, but providing *any* advantage to religion or non-faith as an *effect* of legislation (2) passing *any* law, or undertaking *any* administrative action that allows the sponsoring or supporting (financially or otherwise) of *any* religions or alternative non-faiths such as atheism. We ask the House to recognise the words of our first prime minister, Edmund Barton, that 'the whole mode of government, the whole province of the State is secular', allowing the manifestation of any belief or non-faith, subject only to limitation by law, but sponsoring or supporting none.