

Parliamentary SRE Celebration

The Minister and Shadow Minister for Education both expressed their thanks and support to our community volunteers who provide SRE.



Rob Stoke, Minister for Education

The Hon Rob Stokes MP, NSW Minister for Education

Distinguished guests, one and all. It is awesome standing here and looking at all these incredible supporters of special religious education in our schools. It's a great honour for me to stand alongside my parliamentary colleagues from different parties and express our bipartisan support for the volunteer efforts that you provide in teaching our young people, and the love you provide for young people in our schools; to offer you that support but also to say profoundly, thank you. Thank you for the work that you do in our schools.

... In other societies, there is in an Orwellian tone of 'freedom from re-

ligion' where any celebration of any religion is prohibited. So, isn't it wonderful that in this country we have the freedom to celebrate religious diversity? Isn't it wonderful that we can celebrate that, while we have faith and that defines us, we recognise we have different faiths and that's something we can celebrate together? Ironically, our different faiths do not divide us but they unite us and they make us truly and uniquely Australian and that is something worth celebrating.

Professor Gross also made the wonderful — I found deeply profound — comment, that in a post-modern world that, where so much of what we believe is challenged and tested and the idea of norms is somehow inappropriate, isn't it wonderful that SRE offers us some concrete truths that we can teach our young people? John Adams, the second president of the United States, said "the purpose of education is twofold. It's to make a living, but it's also to make a life". And to create a moral citizenry, people who actually don't just care about themselves but care about one another; surely, that has to be one of the objects of education. They need instruction not just in academic pursuits, not just in sporting pursuits, but also in emotional and spiritual wellbeing. That's the totality of what it is to be a human; and what we're celebrating tonight is our shared humanity, and what a wonderful thing to celebrate together. ...

... So, I conclude by saying a profound thank you, on behalf of the Government, and I know other members feel the same way and I know

Jihad will talk to you in the same vein. We are so grateful for the volunteer efforts that you provide. We are so grateful that enshrined in legislation in the Education Act is the religious freedom to be able to have the opportunity to provide — voluntarily — instruction in all sorts of different religious ethics in schools right across this state. It's a wonderful freedom. It's something to cherish, it's some-



Jihad Dib MP, Shadow Minister for Education

thing to defend. And it's something that, from all the parliamentarians here and all the parties represented here, we want to defend on your behalf. Thank you.

**NSW Parliament House
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