



*so children from all religious and non-religious backgrounds can thrive together*

**Media release**  
**26 September 2017**

## Secular Education Network launches school gate campaign to talk directly to parents about Religious Instruction

This Wednesday, September 27th, a nationwide campaign by the Secular Education Network (SEN) targeting schools with religious instruction (RI) will begin. The aim is to reach out to parents at these schools and provide them with information about their school's religious instruction, and counter some of the misinformation that parents commonly receive.

Christchurch will be at the forefront of the campaign with Wharenui School in Riccarton, where volunteers from SEN will hand out fliers at the end of the school day and be available to answer questions. They will also have copies of some of the RI "teacher's manuals" that are used at the school for parents to see for themselves.

Information on which schools have RI has been obtained by David Hines, of SEN, through a recent comprehensive survey of religious instruction and other religious practices and involvement in state schools. See below attached preliminary list of schools which have RI.

*Tanya Jacob, South Island SEN representative says "Parents don't usually know what's going on in religious instruction. They trust the school, but often the school Board doesn't really know what's going on either. There are cases where parents would be shocked. They'd be disgusted. Often they're just going along with it because they don't want their child to be singled out. We want to wake these schools up!"*

Religious Instruction regularly encourages children to evangelise their peers, and with activities like acting out choking themselves as non-believers not wishing to follow Christianity, it encourages bullying. Young children being told they or their loved ones will die if they sin leads to anxious, tearful kids - and this is being allowed to happen because missionary-minded Christian volunteers are permitted in our classrooms.

David Hines and Tanya Jacob are also heading a case in the Human Rights Review Tribunal against religious instruction and other religious intrusions in state schools. They have witnesses from around the country ranging from parents and teachers to religious experts. They are funding the case through givealittle donations and through a pledge of dollar-for-dollar assistance by the NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists.

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/tanyajacob-davidhines>

### **Background**

David Hines and Tanya Jacob are co-claimants in a case against religious instruction before the Human Rights Review Tribunal. They have 26 witnesses including parents, religious leaders and experts in religious studies, psychology and philosophy. Unfortunately, despite their case being logged early in the year, a massive backlog at the Tribunal has led to considering advice to move the case to the High Court.

### **Contacts**

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