

Did you know?

(The fourth in a series of articles exploring religious education in government schools.)

Teaching about creation

Sometimes I think that the controversies surrounding the creation-evolution debate, the ordination of woman and speaking in tongues are the devil's main way of distracting Christians from the main game of declaring Christ to the world. We seem to spend an unbelievable amount of time on such issue and this is not to undervalue their importance.

The position for teachers in government schools is clear: creation science cannot be taught as science. This does not mean that alternative views of the origins of the world and life on earth cannot be explored in Human Society and Its Environment subjects or science.

With reference to evolution, science teachers are required to teach about evolution as part of the curriculum and students' understanding of evolution is tested in the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. Students are not required to believe evolution theory and here is the main point. There are many beliefs, behaviours and facts in life that we know about but do not believe and are not committed to. Often some understanding of other religions and what other people believe is needed to understand the world we live in. Teaching about such beliefs does not require people to be committed to them or to believe them.

I remember some students at a study camp asking a teacher to teach the HSC Biology topic on evolution to them because their teacher, a Christian, had not taught the syllabus but taught only a literal interpretation of Genesis 1. These students were greatly disadvantaged for their HSC because the teacher had failed to distinguish between learning about and believing the syllabus requirements on evolution.

There are many things in life that we need to learn about for particular reasons: evolution is one such topic for students, and in a government school students are not required to believe the syllabus content or the expressed view of the teacher or what other students may say.