

## Did you know?

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

Did you know that it's all right to tell students what you believe?

Christian teachers are often guarded about commenting on their own religious beliefs to students. They fear that they might be accused of indoctrination or that somehow they are not really allowed to tell students about what they believe.

The answer to these questions is found not in policies about religious education but in the Department's *Controversial Issues In Schools*. This very sensible policy makes clear that schools are to be a base of rational discourse where different ideas and opinions are respected, including Christian views. Government schools are not places for indoctrination, where the teacher's view dominates and is imposed on students. Whether these views are about religious, political or social issues, rational discourse is about variety and balance, about looking at alternatives. It is not about canvassing every view, no matter how outrageous it might be, or about devoting equal time to every viewpoint.

Teaching about controversial issues is about values clarification, about expanding understanding by exposure to other viewpoints. For Christians such tests hold no fears because the ultimate standard (the nature and character of God) will withstand such questions and tests. Putting a Christian view is as valid as putting any other viewpoint, even more valid. Putting a Christian viewpoint without allowing students the opportunity to consider other viewpoints uses the teacher's power relationship to impose a view. Such an imposition could be considered unloving, not Christian and not in keeping with the policy.

Often amidst a class discussion, students will ask you what the teacher thinks about a particular matter. In these circumstances where a variety of views are being canvassed there is no reason why the teacher's opinion should not be stated if the teacher believes it would be appropriate. And then move on.