

GPSC2 GPSC2 - QON - St James Ethics Centre

From: "Simon Longstaff"
To: <GPSC2@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 4/16/2012 3:17 PM
Subject: QON - St James Ethics Centre

Dear Ms Main

I refer to the 'Question On Notice' asked by the Hon Greg Donnelly in response to St James Ethics Centre's submission to the 'Ethics Classes Inquiry'.

Question from the Hon Greg Donnelly:

1. Point 7 on page 2 of your submission says: "It is for this reason that SJEC has consistently argued that ethics classes should only be offered to children who have already elected not to attend SRE (what we call a 'second line' option). We note that Departmental guidelines have not always allowed for this principled position to be applied." Can you explain what you mean in the second sentence? With respect to the Departmental guidelines that you refer to, what did those guidelines say? If you have a copy, or specific reference to these Departmental guidelines, can you please provide them?

I respond as follows:

1. St James Ethics Centre (SJEC) has consistently argued that ethics classes should only be offered to children who are not attending classes in SRE in NSW State Primary Schools.
2. The context of the relevant observation is historical. In the course of undertaking the 2010 trial of ethics classes in 10 schools, the Department of Education insisted that all parents (in the participating schools) be advised of the ethics classes being offered for a 10 week trial. This direction was at odds with SJEC's preference - which was simply to communicate with the parents of children who had 'opted out' of SRE. The Department insisted that all parents be advised of the trial of ethics classes on the basis that to do is consistent with its policy of announcing any new program (usually developed by a faith group) offered during the time set aside for SRE. The principle behind this policy is that if parents are to have more than a merely token right to make choices for their children, then they need to be informed of the options available to them. Thus, they argued that if the options change, then the relevant information available to parents should be updated.
3. We do not have knowledge of how the Department is handling this issue now that ethics classes are underway.
4. We do not have copies of relevant guidelines or policies.

I hope that this information assists.

Yours sincerely,

DR SIMON LONGSTAFF FCPA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



GPO Box 3599 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia T +61 2 9299 9566 D +61 2 9909 5734 F +61 2 9299 9477 ethics.org.au ethi-call (the good decision line): 1800 672 303

The Unexamined Life is Not Worth Living - Socrates

Volunteer for St James Ethics Centre, new roles [available](#) | IQ2 Sydney 26 July [If we keep populating we will perish](#) IQ2 Melbourne 28 July [There is no justification for risking Australian lives in Afghanistan](#)

This communication is intended for the addressee named and may contain information that is strictly confidential. Reproduction,