

**Submission
No 36**

**INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS
CLASSES REPEAL) BILL 2011**

Name: Mr Adam Shapiro

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8 December 2011

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Submission to the Committee Inquiring into Ethics Classes

I am writing to express my opinion that ethics classes should continue as a direct alternative to religious education in NSW public schools.

While I welcome scrutiny of ethics classes to ensure that they meet requirements and to iron out any implementation issues, I believe that the current enquiry is in place primarily to satisfy Fred Nile and the Christian Democratic Party in a cynical attempt to secure their support.

Further, I would suggest that if SRE classes provide a compelling learning and/or spiritual experience for children then they should be able to stand up to competition with secular ethics classes. If they fail to do so, this is an indication of the failure of SRE and says more about the need to review SRE than ethics courses. I would therefore call for a parallel investigation of scripture classes which, as I understand it, have not been meaningfully reviewed since the 19th century.

I do not permit my children to attend SRE classes because I do not subscribe to the belief systems put forward by organised religion. This is my right as a citizen in our secular society. Others choose to send their children to SRE as is their equivalent right. If the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 were repealed, there would no longer be a legal requirement to offer ethics classes as an option for my children and they would likely be given nothing meaningful to do during the time dedicated to religious instruction. While this supports the rights of those who chooses to send their children to SRE classes, it seems to deny the equivalent rights to my children to attend secular ethics classes.

I am willing to accept continued religious education for those who want it, but this should not be at the cost of children from families with other belief systems exercising their rights to have their children attend meaningful secular ethics classes. I believe that such a situation would result in direct discrimination against my children and would be entirely unacceptable to thousands of parents, children and other members of the NSW community.

Yours sincerely

Adam Shapiro