

**Submission
No 399**

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

Name: Ms Jane Hager

Date received: 21/02/2012

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

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the Ethics Coordinators at St Ives Primary School. St Ives Primary School is a medium sized primary school (total of approximately 370 students). I strongly support the continuation of Ethics classes in NSW state schools.

The current setup of Ethics/SRE works well

SRE continues to run very successfully at my school. The majority of children attend SRE.

As in many, many other schools, Ethics classes have also been operating successfully at St Ives Primary. I have spoken to local families who have been frustrated for decades as generations of the families children have had their time wasted during the SRE timeslot, as they have had no alternative but to attend non-scripture. They are extremely pleased that a high quality, non-religious, philosophy alternative has finally been made available. After decades of being discriminated against, these families and their children are finally being treated justly.

The St Ives Primary school's staff are supportive and appreciative of the efforts of their SRE and Ethics providers.

The Ethics Course is designed and run in a highly professional manner

I interviewed three candidates for the St Ives Primary Ethics teacher position. All of the candidates were highly skilled professionals with a lot of experience working with children. The selected candidate was a retired local General Practitioner, who approaches her role with dedication and enthusiasm. She underwent 2 days initial face to face training, initial online training and now undertakes ongoing training both in face to face seminars and online. Mentors are available if the teachers requires them.

Both Ethics teachers and coordinators undergo Working with Children Checks and Police Checks.

The curriculum is developed by academics that specialise in teaching philosophy to children.

The parents of Ethics student are given feedback forms so we can ensure that the classes continuously improve.

The Ethics Course had already been positively independently reviewed and is supported by the general public.

The Ethics Course had already been reviewed in 2010. The findings of this review were overwhelmingly positive in support of ethics classes in NSW.

There is overwhelming public support for Ethics classes. After the release of the previous evaluation report of the Ethics trial for public comment, 745 community submissions were received with 730 supporting ethics continuing.

The public can clearly see that the current review is a vote buying exercise due to the government not having control of the NSW parliament's upper house. The O'Farrell government will be seen as corrupt if it allows a fundamentalist religious lobby to dictate what is done by children who do not attend scripture. Removal of Ethics classes is completely unacceptable to many thousands of children, parents and NSW citizens.

The option to attend Ethics helps validate the inclusion of SRE in Public Schools.

In all other cases at St Ives Primary, elective subjects occur before/after school or during recess and lunch breaks. An elective subject is one that is not relevant to all of the children in a class. If the option of Ethics were to be taken away, SRE should be moved to become a before or after school activity, so children of families who are interest can organise for children to attend, whilst not wasting the time of children who do not attend SRE.

Ethics classes offer children who do not attend SRE the option of something educational and interesting to do in the SRE timeslot. If the state government removes this option these children return to the prior appalling situation of being discriminated against and having their time wasted. In this situation a review of the inclusion of SRE in the state school system would be needed, as it would be clear that religious fundamentalist influence was undermining both democratic processes in the NSW state parliament and the right to hold a secular viewpoint in our state schools.

Jane Hager

Ethic Coordinator St Ives Primary School