

Submission
No 115

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

Name: Ms Voren O'Brien

Date received: 9/02/2012

Partially Confidential

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission to the Inquiry into Ethics Classes

I am writing as a parent of primary school students and as a recently graduated primary school teacher with some classroom experience.

My daughter attended _____ where the Ethics program was initially trialled. She also attended the ethics classes once they were established as an alternative to Scripture classes. She found the classes engaging and though provoking and was able to translate her learning into everyday life.

I believe students are increasingly confronted by ethical issues in today's society and require some training at the primary school level to help consider alternative approaches and decide what is best for them. I urge the Committee to support the valuable learning that the Ethics classes provide in schools.

As a teacher, I have been present as an observer in Scripture classes and also in the non-Scripture classes during Scripture time when students are forbidden to learn anything. My opinion, from observing several different classrooms, are that BOTH options are an incredible waste of time.

- The Scripture classes are run by representatives of the nominated religion. They have no formal teaching skills and not much of a handle on classroom discipline. Very little seems to be achieved in the designated time.
- Supervising the non-Scripture kids is heartbreaking. There is so much time pressure in the primary school setting and yet here the students are sitting in a classroom unable to use that time for learning.

If a long-standing agreement between Church and State means that Scripture still has to be offered, at least consider Ethics as a valuable alternative to those students not connected to any religious belief system or practice.

And if the representatives of the various religions are concerned about losing their "flock" to the more exciting alternative (Ethics classes) then they need to lift their game and provide decent teachers with engaging material rather than just stamping out the competition.

Yours sincerely,

Voren O'Brien