

**Submission
No 450**

INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS CLASSES REPEAL) BILL 2011

Name: Mrs Felicity Kearns

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Thursday 23rd February 2012

RE: Submissions to Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011

As a parent and a Primary School Teacher, I ask that you please do not repeal the Education Act (Ethics) 2010. Students who do not participate in Special Religious Education (SRE) have not only the right to learn about ethics in a secular environment, but will benefit from a more broadminded approach to ethics than is offered by SRE. I hope that one day soon my children's school will offer secular ethics classes as an alternative during SRE lesson time.

I am not opposed to children participating in SRE if it is their parents' wish. I, however, do not want my children learning that religious beliefs are fact. I think any religious education should be about religion as a concept, teaching about all religions, their history and social context, so that students can decide if they wish to believe in one or not. However, SRE classes teach from one point of view only, and one in which I, as an atheist, don't believe. In fact, I consider teaching from such a narrow-minded perspective to be preaching intolerance to our children by rejecting all other beliefs.

Although religious organisations do a lot of good within our community, that does not make them the only "good" people. Morality and ethics do not need to be connected to religion. It is more important that children develop an understanding of *why* it is important to be a kind, caring, compassionate, considerate person, rather than just because an imaginary being says so.

Currently most children who don't participate in SRE are given free play. There's nothing wrong with children playing, but there is a time and a place for it. In my experience, many parents keep their children in SRE purely out of concern that their children would otherwise miss out on "learning time" at school. The option of secular ethics classes during SRE lesson time would reassure many parents that their children are still learning about "right and wrong". Most people I know who have strong religious beliefs send their children to Christian schools, not public schools.

Religion in Australia is optional, so I don't understand why it is given such exclusionary power in our schools.

Sincerely,

Felicity Kearns