

**Submission  
No 394**

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

**Name:** Ms Elizabeth Jones

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25<sup>th</sup> February, 2012

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2  
NSW Parliament House

Dear Sir,

I hope you will forgive the day or two lateness of this short submission below. It was only when I saw the *Sydney Morning Herald's* report yesterday of the enquiry into the Ethics classes that I, and no doubt many others, realised that the enquiry had begun and subsequent Googling revealed that it was possible for members of the public to put in submissions – which didn't appear to have been widely known.

#### SUBMISSION

1) The Ethics lobby makes unsubstantiated claims:

In the first instance the lobby group has never substantiated its claims that 100,000 children in NSW public primary schools do not take SRE classes. At no stage have we ever seen any survey results.

If indeed this number is 100,000 (out of the 430,177 primary government school children) the 2,700 which Simon Longstaff boasts of now taking ethics classes in 280 schools (out of the 1,612 NSW primary schools) is indeed small fry and not quite the landslide of public support that lobbyists claim.

2) The sample class shows moral relativism as its basis

The example class, as shown on the Parents4Ethics website, after a condescending introduction about "a man called Socrates", shows children discussing the idea that "Kids should be allowed to wear what they like" – which could be a suitable topic for a third class debate. A teacher or debating coach (in which roles I have had experience), however, in co-ordinating debate preparation would try to get children to see the other side - Who pays for the clothes and should have a say? To what extent are children under their parents' authority and guidance? And why? What are the limits of a philosophy of "doing what you like"?

This last is of course a basic religious question, which when I taught SRE would often be discussed.

The volunteer teacher in the sample ethics lesson says that she is not there to tell them what is right or wrong – so makes no attempt to guide the children in widening their ideas or looking at what ethical questions are raised by a guiding idea of "doing what you like".

Elizabeth Jones