**Submission No 141**

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

**Organisation**: Australians United for Separation of Church and State Inc

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# Australians United for Separation of Church and State Inc.

***— for a level playing field —***

11 February 2012

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I am writing on behalf of Australians United for Separation of Church and State (AUSCAS), further to a resolution passed at an AUSCAS general meeting on 14 December 2011.

I refer to the enquiry into the Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011.

While we welcome the parliament's enquiring into the ethics classes conducted in NSW public schools, we note that they were evaluated formally when they were trialled: we call for this evaluation to be taken fully into account by the committee.

It is appropriate that ethics classes be given in public schools in the secular state of NSW: they are suitable for children of parents of any religion and none. We regard the ethics classes as contributing to a "level playing field" for children in NSW public schools.

Repealing the Eduction Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 would return school children not in scripture classes to the grossly unsatisfactory situation of wasting their time, being given nothing to do during the classes.

We also comment on a matter related to the ethics classes, namely the scripture classes to which they are an alternative. We propose that the teaching of religion, i.e. "scripture", be abolished as inappropriate in a secular state. Instruction in any one religion is discriminatory against adherents of other religions and to the many Australians who have no religious belief. We recognise the right of churches and other religious bodies to free speech but we oppose the privileged access of teachers of religion to children in state schools. It follows that we also reject the proposal for setting a minimum time, e.g. 30 minutes per week, for religious instruction in schools.

In the present situation, when both ethics and scripture classes are conducted, we note the asymmetry in the fact that only one set is being evaluated.

Yours sincerely

Mark Tindall
Secretary