

**Submission
No 386**

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

Organisation: Crown Street Public School P & C
Date received: 24/02/2012



**Crown Street Public School
P+C Association**

23rd February, 2012

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

Attention: The Hon. Marie FICARRA

Dear Madam Chair,

Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011

On behalf of P+C Association of Crown St Public School in Surry Hills, we are writing to you outlining our support for the continuation of the Ethics Program currently operating in our school. While not a P+C activity, we have always supported the program as it offers an additional opportunity for the children who do not attend SRE classes. Our school community is diverse and this program aligns with views of a significant group of families.

We do not favour one group over another and our view as a P+C is that we should support any parent group or initiative if there is a cogent argument and sufficient support beyond the special interest group. This was the case with the Ethics Program with significant debate at P+C meetings. The P+C facilitated an open discussion with a number of the SRE groups and the Ethics group to provide a forum for an honest appraisal of the issues.

This program was first discussed in 2009 and early on it was clear that there was positive support within the school community. After sustained lobbying and a unanimous vote of support from the P+C, Crown Street Public School was included in the pilot program. This has now translated into classes being offered to years 5 and 6 on a permanent basis.

The figures for 2011 indicate that 20 students in years 5 and 6 attend ethics classes, of which 13 were in year 6, and 7 in year 5. Of the 21 students in year 6, 7 students attended SRE classes while 14 attended non-scripture (13 taking ethics classes). Due to staffing constraints, Crown Street PS is unable to offer classes to a larger group despite there being a demand for additional places.

Typically, 45% of each year opt out of SRE classes, however this increases to over 65% in years 5 and 6. This was universally seen as a poor educational outcome and wasteful of valuable time. The ethics program offers an alternative to those who opt out and gives a better outcome than previously was the case, when those that opted out simply watched television.

We commend the vigour and dignity with which our Ethics group has organized the program as demonstrated by the harmonious introduction and sustained operation of the program through 2011. Our community is very supportive of this program and would be disappointed should it be discontinued. We reiterate that we do not favour Ethics over the existing SRE classes – we are supportive of the beliefs of the entire community – however we do support the idea of diversity and the need to provide positive educational outcomes for all, whether they attend SRE classes or not.

Should you require a more detailed submission or wish to speak to either of us about the P+C position on this matter please contact us.

Sincerely,

Helen Bouropoulos – President, Crown Street Public School P+C

Alex Kibble – Secretary, Crown Street Public School P+C

cc John Croker, Principal, Crown Street Public School
Lesley Holden, Ethics Convenor, Crown Street Public School
Parents4ethics