

**Submission  
No 43**

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

**Name:** Mr Will & Mrs Rachel D'Arcy

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2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011

To the Committee investigating Ethics Classes and the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010

Dear Committee Members,

I write because I am very concerned that there should be any change to the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010. It was an Act that only came into being very recently, and after much deliberation and some opposition.

I have no problem with a review or investigation of the classes, although I would point out that a review was carried out after the ethic class trial last year. That review was overwhelmingly positive. Ethics classes have popular support state-wide -most particularly from those parents and their children who have been lucky enough to be offered ethics classes as an alternative to SRE in their schools. In my own children's school there are no classes offered currently but I am hoping that will change with time. My children attend SRE as the alternative is that they do nothing.

If there does have to be investigation of ethics classes, which I suspect will take many months and cost a significant amount of money, then I propose your committee should also investigate the SRE classes as there has not been an investigation of SRE classes since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I have a number of concerns regarding SRE classes.

There appears to be no independent oversight of what is taught by the NSW Department of Education or Board of Studies. The SRE teachers in my school I understand are fine people. However, I do not have the opportunity to meet them nor have I had the chance to view the curriculum. I meet the other teachers regularly and have come to know them quite well.

I have no way of knowing whether an SRE teacher will try to indoctrinate my children, how much religious fervour he/she might bring into the classroom or whether tolerance for all beliefs is encouraged.

It would concern me, and I believe many parents, if any religious education was presented as fact other than a belief. In a recent survey by Macquarie University 80% of SRE teachers believe that students should NOT be taught about any other religion!! Why not?

An SRE teacher that I did meet, once in the course of our conversation, expressed her opposition to gay people in general and gay priests in particular. I would be very upset if this opinion was mentioned in a state school class room. I know that any teacher in the NSW Department of Education would not be permitted to express such opinions in a school environment. I understand

there are many other documented instances of SRE teachers expressing similar if not worse prejudices while teaching SRE in state schools.

I also question the true objectivity of the current investigating committee. Given the known religious bias of several members of the Committee, I have grave doubts that the committee can ever function in an objective and fair manner. I suspect that an outcome against general ethic classes is predetermined. Please remember that your role in state parliament as elected representatives is to represent ALL constituents – even those that have different viewpoints on religion to yourselves.

In summary, there has already been a recent investigation of ethics classes. By all means have another one, but I ask the Premier to balance the composition of the committee, and widen the investigation to include SRE classes. It is long overdue.

Yours sincerely,

Will & Rachel D'Arcy