

**Submission
No 25**

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

Name: Ms Barbara Davis

Date received: 5/12/2011

2/12/11



Dear Sir/Madam

As an agnostic parent of a 15 year old girl and a 12 year old boy I have had 14 years "experience" of primary Special Religious Education. Experiences which have included attendance at Catholic, Presbyterian, Uniting, Buddhist and Non-Scripture lessons. (Almost a comparative religion course until the Deputy Principal put a stop to such "sampling" by non true believers!) This year my son attended inaugural Ethics classes and these classes which have been without question some of the best classes of my son's time at primary school.

Before these Ethics classes I thought it was terribly unfair that children with no religious affiliation were not permitted to engage in any meaningful activity at this time but were required to attend school by law. (During Nonscripture sessions my daughter experienced the "roving" teacher who patrolled the class forbidding children to do homework at this time. When I complained to the Deputy (again!) she claimed it was a mistake! How do such mistakes develop I wonder?)

If my son was in a similar position again I would think seriously about homeschooling for the duration of this period and would encourage others to do so. In addition I would support an inquiry into all Special Religious Education which is taught on the whole by volunteers and has no government regulation as far as I can see. My children attended a number of these classes and there were frequently discipline issues and uninspiring content. What place does religious education have in a secular education system at all? Surely it is up to parents to educate their children in their own time.

The Ethics classes have been a wonderful example of a carefully considered curriculum, with opportunities for the children to think, speak, take turns and question. All fantastic life skills. The contrast with the SRE classes my children attended was glaring.

When I discuss these events with my children (the possibility of scrapping such a good program due to the pressure of a few politicians vs the majority) we talk about political ethics and the qualities of good leaders and unfortunately it is depressing talk.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Davis