

**Submission
No 314**

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

Name: Ms Lesley Tipping

Date received: 23/02/2012

Lesley Tipping

23rd February, 2012

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

To The Director

Re: Committee Inquiring into Ethics Classes

As a parent of two primary school children, I am extremely concerned at the NSW Government's decision to conduct a formal inquiry to examine " the stated objectives, curriculum, implementation, effectiveness and other related matters pertaining to the current operation of 'special education in ethics' being conducted in State schools, and whether the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 should be repealed."

While scrutiny of ethics classes is welcome I would like to see a parallel investigation of Special Religious Education (SRE) classes.

Special Religious Education (SRE) classes have been running since the 19th century with no formal investigation, or formal training of their teachers.

If the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 is repealed, there will no longer be a legal requirement to offer ethics classes as an option for children not attending SRE classes. This means that children opting out of SRE are given nothing meaningful to do. This decision would discriminate against those children who have chosen to opt out of SRE and would be entirely unacceptable to parents, children and other members of the NSW community.

Many parents at the school my children attend send their children to SRE purely so they are occupied for the duration of the class, as opposed to sitting in the library and colouring in. Currently ethics classes are being offered to

years 5 & 6.

Primary Ethics has very strict guidelines about what can and cannot be done and these guidelines are adhered to at our school. Ethics is not allowed to be actively promoted to parents or students. However the religious organisations that teach SRE at our school, give the children gifts and all matter of religious advertising material to take home for the family.

There appears to be a real fear campaign about Ethics classes being conducted by Fred Nile of the Christian Democrats and his followers, which is nothing short of religious propaganda. The ethics classes have nothing to do with SRE and are teaching philosophy and how to help children analyse social situations for better outcomes.

Fred Nile and the Christian Democrats actions and comments regarding Ethics in schools are nothing short of unethical. I ask you to consider a formal investigation into the teaching methods and practice of SRE classes in NSW schools.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Tipping