

Submission
No 318

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 23/02/2012

Partially Confidential

23rd February 2012

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

This submission is to request that the government does not repeal the Education Act (Ethics) 2010 as is being currently proposed.

I must state up front that my son does attend scripture classes and even if the act is not repealed he will continue to do so. I have no problem with the provision of scripture classes in schools. My submission is based on the concept of fairness in the treatment of all children in our schools.

The act currently ensures there is a legal requirement to offer ethics classes as an option for those not attending scripture classes. To remove this right without an alternative productive activity (i.e. they just waste their time playing rather than doing sport, another learning activity etc.) means the children will in effect be doing nothing beneficial. The argument that it would be unfair to those doing the scripture classes if the others did something different is untenable as it means the non scripture children would as a result be treated unfairly.

I have heard an argument that there is no need for ethics classes as scripture teaches ethics. This is not correct. Scripture teaches a moral framework (which I tend to agree with) that incorporates ethics however it is from a religious basis. To deny a child the opportunity to also learn ethics is inherently unfair to that child and is also a loss to society in terms of developing well rounded individuals as they move into adulthood.

The teaching of ethics is similar to teaching philosophy which I understand occurs in Queensland high schools. I understand the benefit of this approach is that family conflict is reduced (i.e. the child learns to argue from a point of logic rather than emotion) and the child is better able to understand some of the very complex aspects of life in general. This is an example of the benefit to society as a whole that these teachings (of which ethics is included) offer us all.

The removal of ethics is also discriminatory to those parents who do not have a religious affiliation but would like the benefits that ethics would provide. I believe this group of concerned parents is quite large based on my experience last year at the parent kickoff night. At this event a reasonably large number of parents asked about the availability of ethics classes or a religious overview class (covering the basics of all religions) as they did not want their children to be doing nothing but did not have a particular religion. To prevent ethics classes will in effect be discriminatory.

I had highlighted these issues to Mr O'Farrell prior to the last election and he had committed that they would not be removed i.e. the majority of the people voted at the last election on the promise that ethics classes would not be removed. I understand that the repealing of the act is an initiative from an independent member of Parliament and do not necessarily represent the view of the government however I would request the committee take into account the position of the majority of the electorate which was to support the implementation of Ethics classes in NSW.

In summary, I request that the government does not repeal the Education Act (Ethics) 2010 on the basis it is inherently unfair and discriminatory to a section of society, does not represent the majority view of the electorate and is also a loss to society in terms of developing well rounded individuals as they move into adulthood.

Yours Sincerely