

**Submission
No 409**

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

Name: Ms Leonie Johnson

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

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the continuation in ethics classes in NSW public schools. My submission is based on my experiences as the mother of a child who attends ethics classes as well as my role as the volunteer ethics coordinator at my daughter's school.

My daughter attended scripture classes from kindergarten until year three when she refused to continue attending the classes. The reason she gave was that she felt uncomfortable with the teacher and often frightened by the content. I agreed to take her out of scripture because, even though I think that learning about religion is very important, I was concerned by the worksheets she occasionally brought home and by her descriptions of what was covered in class.

After 2 years of sitting in the school corridor doing nothing in "non-scripture" my daughter attended ethics classes during 2011 and is continuing to do so. What impresses me most about the program is her engagement with us at home after each class. She asks our opinion on the moral issue that was discussed in class that week. I am impressed by how well she articulates the factors that she sees as contributing to her judgement on various moral issues. Over the last 12 months I have noticed that she has become more confident at making judgements about right and wrong and that she is able to say why and consider our views in forming her own. This has spilled over into other areas of her life, not just the topics covered in ethics classes, and has prompted many interesting discussions in our home about what is right and wrong and why.

As the volunteer ethics coordinator at my daughter's school, I have had many conversations with parents and teachers over the last 12 months. The class teachers have reported that ethics classes have provided a useful talking point within their classes, allowing the all children to discuss what they covered in scripture and in ethics - often leading to very similar conclusions on a range of issues.

Over the last 12 months, a number of parents have approached me to say how pleased they are with their children's interest in the classes.

Most impressive in my mind is the feedback that I have received from our two volunteer ethics teachers. Both teachers have remarked on the students' capacity for deep consideration of the topics, the improvement in their abilities develop well thought through views, to articulate what they think and to listen to the views of others.

In our society where technology changes rapidly, where complex moral issues challenge us constantly and where citizens vote on their leaders, I think the ability to critically consider others' views and to be able to follow a process of reasoning in order to decide on moral issues is essential. In our case my daughter has shown a marked improvement in this area over the last 12 months.

I support the current ethics program and would not be in favour of any changes to the legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Leonie Johnson