

**Submission
No 166**

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

Name: Rev Rabbi Zalman Kastel

Date received: 17/02/2012

Ethics Classes Submission

As a religious leader, a Rabbi, I place great importance of the moral and ethical fabric of our society. The golden rule stands in a class of its own as one of the foundations of our society, alongside ethical monotheism for those who chose that path, and the great Aboriginal tradition of custodianship and personal responsibility that echoes across the millennia in this land and needs to continue into the present.

Parents have the primary responsibility for the values of their children. Yet, parents and children are very busy and there is a need for these lessons to be reinforced. The Ethics curriculum which I have reviewed is one important opportunity for students to develop character and decency.

I have also been a Jewish Educator for SRE classes in the school system for 10 years. While some of my students and their families were there by choice others were there by default. I support choice for something as important as scripture and ethics. Students or families who attach importance to religion should be free to pursue this while families who do not have an option that aligns with their belief should have another meaningful option.

The commitment of the ethics program not to actively recruit children from religious classes and to share their very stimulating curriculum with any religious group that wants it is most welcome. I do not think it is realistic that no child will lose out on religious instruction as a result of offering another option. Children might follow their friends, or go to the class they think is most fun. To the degree that is practical, the ethics program has addressed those risks. On balance, the benefit offered by the ethics program greatly outweighs any possible downside.

As a diversity educator I also welcome any initiative that supports tolerance and acceptance of differences.

I would like to see a continuation of freedom for students to learn about what matters most in the view of their family. "Non-Scripture" is a waste of time that reflects an old deal. In an age of social media, economic and social change, coupled with the timeless challenge of raising children to be good decent people, we cannot afford to waste one minute of one child's time that could be spent being prepared for living as an upright human being. I recommend the continuation of the Ethics classes in schools.