

Submission
No 273

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

Please do not repeal the Education Act (Ethics) 2010. It is within every parent's (and child's) rights to choose not to have a religious education, if that religion is not their chosen belief system.

Why should the state favour Christian education in its public schools when we are an entirely secular nation, with the separation of church and state protected and enforced by our constitution? When the alternative to RE classes is simply unstructured 'free time', it is clear that the government/education board has made a conscious decision to coerce children into a certain set of beliefs - this is unlawful and completely unacceptable. I can see no difference whatsoever between offering only Christian education classes and offering only, say, Islamic education classes - both religions are perfectly acceptable religions to be a member of privately, however the point is not that Christianity/Islam/religion is wrong and should not be taught, but that there should absolutely always be a choice. Please keep in mind Chapter V Section 116 of the Australian Constitution: "The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth." Of course it is not compulsory to attend religious classes, but by not offering a secular alternative in its public schools, the government is still, in my opinion, breaching this section of the constitution. Sending children who do not participate in religious education to a room to sit and wait is not a fair or equal choice - therefore, it is plain to me that Christianity is being favoured by a supposedly secular government in this instance, and has been for decades.

I am appalled that this act is even under consideration for repeal considering it literally poses no threat to religious education in public schools, causes no damage to anyone or any institution, and indeed provides a positive alternative to disingenuously sending children to RE classes out of necessity. A state government's role is absolutely not to make decisions about a child's religion. It is time for the Australian government to stop being bullied by the church and declare once and for all that Ethics classes are to be offered permanently as an equal alternative to Christian teaching.