

Submission
No 89

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

Name: Dr Helen Nicholson

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Partially Confidential

Dr Helen Nicholson

01-02-12

Dear NSW Parliamentary Committee Inquiring into Ethics Classes Members,

Although I am the Ethics Co-ordinator at our local school, I write to you today as a parent of four children, all of whom have been looking forward to "something to actually do" during non-scripture time for many years. The ethics classes run by Primary Ethics fit the bill perfectly as they provide our children with stimulating, thought-provoking material and our children are desperate to be able to attend throughout their years at school. I therefore urge you on their behalf to continue to allow our children this constructive activity during non-scripture time – if the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 is repealed, their only other option is to colour-in.

This is because for our family, like many others around the state, religious education is simply not an option. Although we personally believe that there is no place for religion in state education (and would therefore very much like to see an Inquiry into the place of SRE in state schools in the 21st century) my husband and I are prepared to tolerate school time being used for the religious instruction of other children if our children are not discriminated against by having to sit in a room of 'outcasts' doing incredibly boring colouring-in week after week.

The Primary Ethics program has been very well developed and gives scope for children to extend themselves. For example, at our school, our ethics students last year were so stimulated by the topic of homelessness that they asked to develop a play to perform at school assembly. The feedback about their performance was entirely positive and it was lovely to see the pride the children felt about their initiative. We were also particularly appreciative to the school community, who welcomed their performance.

Unfortunately, our school P&C does not meet until after the due date for submissions. Before commencing classes at our school, however, the P&C did vote to support their introduction via a democratic survey of every family in the school. If a small school like ours can uphold the principles of democracy, I would very much appreciate it if you did not take them away.

With deepest sincerity,

Helen Nicholson.