

**Submission
No 114**

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

Name: Ms Samantha Donnelly

Date received: 9/02/2012

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

Re: Submission to the Inquiry into Ethics Classes

To whom it may concern

I am writing to voice my support that the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 **NOT** be repealed. As a parent of two school age children I am concerned that they are being forced to be completely inactive while the children attending Scripture classes are learning about religion. This is a situation which currently discriminates against the children who do not have a religious background and who choose to not attend Scripture classes as they are not relevant to their learning curriculum. This is unacceptable, considering there are so few hours in the week for the children to be learning valuable information.

Following several discussions with teachers at the school, I realized that Non-Scripture time is very chaotic and hard for the teachers to manage. Obviously, not being able to go on with any meaningful work of their own (apparently this would "discriminate" against those attending Scripture classes) makes it difficult for the children to control their restlessness. Some of the teachers actually resent having to oversee Non Scripture times for this reason. My daughter has been criticized twice during Non Scripture time for going on with her work, as this was seen to be "getting ahead" when the Scripture children were attending their religious instruction. I believe this to be unfair and damaging to expect our young children to accept this situation. Meanwhile children attending Scripture classes are rewarded with lollies, treats and gifts of coloured drawings and sometimes Bibles. Is this a fair society we have constructed for ourselves?

I strongly urge you to consider the importance of offering these children an alternative. Ethics classes are designed to teach the children ways of thinking about issues that affect their everyday worlds, and ways of making good decisions and to give them the confidence to speak out and voice their concerns. Surely these are the kind of values that we wish to pass onto our young people. These classes in no way discriminate against the information learned in Scripture. There is no criticism of the beliefs and values being taught in the Scripture classes. If anything it is reinforcement of the good values, without the religious overtone.

I believe this so strongly that I have undergone the training required to become an ethics teacher and am looking forward to my first class in the next few weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha Donnelly