

Submission
No 287

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

Organisation: State Council of the Presbyterian Women's Association of
Australia in New South Wales (PWA)

Date received: 28/02/2012

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Secular Ethics Course

To the General Purpose Standing Committee No 2

28th February, 2012

The State Council of the Presbyterian Women's Association voted on the 24th February to contribute to this Inquiry in order to urge the repeal of the secular Ethics Course Bill.

We agree that there should be suitable activities for children whose parents have requested they not attend the Special Religious Education (SRE) Classes. However, philosophical discussions are hardly appropriate for the age group involved. They will already have learned how to argue with adults. We have also been informed that issues of right and wrong are already built into classroom instruction over the range of lessons. When the Ethics Course was trialled, the new class was offered to those attending SRE as well as the non-attenders and this did reduce the attendance at SRE. It seems to us that the driving force in pressure to establish the Ethics Classes is ideological and comes from those who oppose the involvement of the Christian faith in schools and would wish to end the teaching of SRE. There is a long standing political agenda evident.

We believe that the teaching the Christian Faith to succeeding generations of children in SRE is of paramount importance for their reasoning and understanding of moral imperatives and the traditions and laws which still govern this nation and indeed the Western World. Children will learn basic good citizenship and consideration of others. This was the reason in the 1950s that Governments then allocated land to each of the Christian churches to build in many new developments as the suburbs of Sydney spread out.

Australia was founded as a Christian Nation as our Constitution states - and the public voted for this when it was written. Our laws and freedoms are Biblically based. We believe it is essential that we continue to teach most children these truths. When students move on to secondary Studies, it is a great educational advantage to know the history and eternal values of the Bible. Children also enjoy the stories and respond to the Christian message with great benefit in understanding. The Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, Harper Lee, who wrote *"To Kill a Mockingbird"* said: *"The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think. No book in the world equals the Bible for that."*

One very good reason for the Government to repeal this law to establish an Ethics program in Government schools is that if the NSW Government does not stop it now as it has promised, public money will inevitably be expected to fund it because any voluntary system of teachers over time is unlikely to be sustainable. This could be very expensive.

We therefore urge the Government to repeal the Law which establishes the Ethics Course.

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