

**Submission
No 113**

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

Name: Ms Suzanne Jarrett

Date received: 9/02/2012

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

To the Director,

Re: Why the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 should not be repealed.

I am both a mother, a teacher in Adult Basic Education and a volunteer for Primary Ethics. In the capacity of ethics teacher I was immediately struck by the high quality of the training and support that I received in this new capacity.

As a volunteer I noticed, for example, that parents of sons in particular felt that their boys needed to be exposed to a course which would develop empathy and a vocabulary and structure for articulating choices about proper and fair behaviour. The girls in the class (my daughter was in another volunteer's ethics group) equally benefitted from the chance to participate in conversations about acceptable and unacceptable choices, as opposed to the rather burdensome expectations of cliques which often pressure girls to have the same values as the rest of the group. The best thing that ethics offered both genders was the opportunity to learn a way to think and behave by participating in lively debate over carefully chosen topics.

Finally, the most important lesson that ethics classes offered all students was to encourage them to think beyond the influences of the media, popular opinion and the celebrity cult which is thrust at younger and younger children.

Living in 2012 I can't believe that there is even a whisper of repealing the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act. Why can't Reverend Nile just live and let live? What is he afraid of? It is beyond me and my many friends and associates. My own children, when they were younger, attended Catholic scripture because I wanted them to learn some of the important Christian scriptures – after family discussion, we decided to put our girls into non-scripture. When ethics became available, we jumped at the chance. My only disappointment was that my children were almost at the end of their primary school years and would therefore not get the benefit of a complete exposure to ethics.

From the start, facilitators were told that we were offering ethics to children whose parents had opted for non-scripture. Non-scripture usually involves kids just sitting around talking. This is not good enough. Ethics offers them valuable lessons. The organisers of the program have offered to share the material with other scripture groups. The organisers of ethics have been fair and generous regarding the use of their material. For this reason especially, if you decide to do an audit on the ethics group it is wrong to single them out for such treatment. If Ethics is put through any process of evaluation then for the sake of parity, the other scripture groups also need to be audited in the same way.

Yours sincerely, Suzanne Jarrett