

Submission  
No 449

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

My main two points for the committee to consider are as follows:

1/ I think the Act should be amended, so that the classes are more clearly named. This is for the purpose of transparency, so that parents will be able to make a proper decision about the course, and not be unwittingly misled as to the course content.

For example, if the students are, as the course framers say, mainly learning ethical thinking, let the classes be called “Ethical Thinking”.

If the students are in fact learning ethics, what sort of ethics are they -what ethical worldview do they reflect? If they are learning Ethics derived from a Koori worldview, let it be called ‘Koori Ethics’. If they are learning ethics based on a humanist and atheist worldview, let the classes be called ‘Humanist and Atheist Ethics’.

(And at the moment, since the classes appear to be teaching mere thinking, with no comment on the conclusions, it is ultimately teaching a morally relativistic view of the world, being derived from the philosophical view Naturalism. As such, perhaps the course should be called “Relativism” or ‘Naturalistic Ethics’, for clarity.)

2/ I think the courses should be suspended, or all due haste made to have the curriculum of the course published as soon as possible, as well as the stated objectives. This is so that parents can make a fully informed decision as to whether they would like their child involved or not. At the moment, parents are only able to make a partially informed decision on this new course, with its unique subject matter, based on the course name, the few parts of the course that have become available, and any information they have learned from the media. It seems unfair to parents that the course has been implemented without this information being available to them.

My following points are just subsidiary points for the committee to consider in their review of the Act.

3/ The Act was passed when the course had no published curriculum or stated objectives. Was due process followed in this regard – were members able to vote in an informed manner, when there was no published curriculum or stated objectives?

4/ There have been procedural errors in some instances, in the implementation of the course, where for instance children have been accepted into SEE classes, when there was no written request from the parents to first exempt the children from SRE. Some principals may have promoted the SEE classes in such a way that it appeared they were endorsing or favouring them over the SRE courses to some extent. It would be good if proper procedures were followed in the ongoing running of the SEE classes, and that the way parents are informed of the classes from now on, not be able to be construed as favouritism.

5/ I feel that the argument that drove the SEE classes being enacted, that non SRE children are ‘doing nothing’ is invalid and unfair.

The value of completing homework, reading and private study should not be undermined as a valid alternative, where parents do not want their child to participate in any of the SRE options on offer. These are constructive activities, and even the

youngest of students can engage in looking at books, and attempting some, if not all of their homework.

The SRE timeslot is a time for students to ponder spiritual issues, as legislated by the state of NSW. On these grounds it would be ideal for the SEE Act to be amended, and SEE moved to a different timeslot, to preserve time in the week for students to engage in spiritual reflection and education. If a parent does not believe in the value of a spiritual education, then opting out seems a fair alternative, just as a parent who does not believe in the value of school sport, or cooking classes, or language learning would be unfair to require an alternative other than non-participation.