

Submission
No 69

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

Name: Ms Sally Fryer

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Partially Confidential

SALLY FRYER

12th December 2012

Dear Committee Members,

I am afraid to say that I am horrified that the Reverend Fred Nile seems to be able to hold Mr Barry O'Farrell to ransom over the issue of Ethics classes in NSW.

In May of 2010 the P&C at [redacted] voted to show our support for the ethics trial that was then taking place in certain public schools in NSW. Our P&C was initially reluctant to vote on such an important matter – our P&C President was a practising Catholic – so it was decided to canvas the opinion of the whole school.

520 letters were distributed to the parents of all pupils. Of the 120 returned by the deadline, 103 were strongly in favour of the ethics trial taking place.

Subsequent to the success of the trial, ethics classes were started at [redacted] and are very popular with children and parents alike. They have been fully embraced by the teaching staff too.

Ethics classes offer a meaningful alternative to those of us who choose not to send our kids to SRE. They broaden the horizons of our children and allow them to engage in meaningful thought and debate about 'big' issues that they will have to contend with for the rest of their lives – lying, fairness, children's rights, interfering with nature, racism, etc etc. They learn how to think for themselves, how to form their own opinions about matters, how to debate fairly and constructively with those who have contrary views. They learn that often there are many views to take into consideration and that rarely is there an absolute right or wrong.

We are lucky at [redacted] as the children already have philosophy teaching as part of the curriculum – even the kindy kids. They all LOVE it. The teaching staff too relish the level of debate that such young kids are capable of and the big ideas that their students are more than happy to engage with.

I cannot understand why this one bigoted individual, who it seems to me fears the whole notion of free and fair and ethical debate, demands further scrutiny of the ethics classes which were trailed just a year ago, when SRE classes have been running for over a century with very little scrutiny.

I have heard tales of young kindy kids refusing to eat apples because they are 'bad' since Eve ate one and committed 'original sin'. I have seen one of the SRE syllabuses which devotes a whole section to the existence of the devil himself... fear based teaching in my opinion. Frankly, this sort of stuff scares me when offered up as TRUTH to impressionable young minds.

I strongly believe that all SRE classes – of all denominations – should equally open their doors and syllabuses up for scrutiny if such is being asked of ethics classes. Does Fred Nile know what is taught in SRE in schools? Has there ever been public scrutiny of the content of these classes?

I will be furious should Fred Nile be given the opportunity to turn back the progress that was made when ethics classes were fairly trialed, deemed successful and introduced into some NSW primary schools. As I'm sure you can imagine this is an issue about which parents feel enormously strongly.

I know that if I were to canvas the whole school again tomorrow the support for ethic classes would only have increased.

How dare one man assume that his views are shared by all of those parents with young kids kids at school now. We WANT these ethics classes and will fight hard to retain them.

I am happy to answer any further questions.

Regards,

Sally Fryer.

Mother of 2 young boys aged 10 and 8.