

**Submission
No 176**

INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS CLASSES REPEAL) BILL 2011

Name: Mr Milton Caine

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Dear Members,

Ethics is a study of rules of conduct, which most people have learned by living and rubbing shoulders with others. They are important foundations for our society, as it is from them we determine what is right and what is wrong. We are saddened by the breakdown in the standards of behaviour within the community. It has got to be agreed that young people are at ever decreasing ages are being rebellious and disrespectful to all authority figures and this does ring alarm bells to me. The foundations have been damaged and we will need first to examine how the foundations were built for our community.

The Australian community come from two significant sources 1. The Aboriginals community 2. English/Irish communities. I am not an expert on the Aboriginal community and so I will not say much about it other than to note its strong points of a sophisticated system of tribal rules and customs, with respect for the elders and tribal traditions. The rebellious person was dealt with in many ways including the 'pointing of the bone'. My early teaching of this, pointing of the bone, was very misguided and since learning from old time elders I now understand that if a person by their actions or lack of action placed themselves apart from the membership of the tribe a dry bone was presented to them. This was a very confronting thing and some would leave the tribe and not take corrective action. As survival in the harsh areas in Australia needed community action those leaving the tribe often died, but the way back was to be a contributor to the tribe according to their capacity.

The English/Irish communities came from strong religious traditions and though many of these new immigrants were sent here for crimes in England. To enhance the the development of moral standards both the Church of England and the Catholic Churches established churches here and through their ministry a unique foundation was laid. The colonial government was very aware that new and strong foundations were needed and so assisted in the religious leadership of the new colonies as these foundations were being forged. It is important to remember that most of the great leaders and reformers of Australia were deeply religious people. This does not mean that they always got it right. It does mean that they were guided by a moral code that was their common foundation. The various religious traditions brought with them further tweaks to the Australian moral code as it continued to develop.

The first main attack on Australian ethics and moral foundations was the amendments to the Marriage Act under the leadership of Lionel Murphy during Gough Whitlam's time as Prime Minister. Since then the various amendments to the Anti discrimination acts and other social direction acts have continued to erode the moral foundations of our ethical values. We have to remember the early education within this country was taken up by the various religious bodies, without which there would have been no education within this country during those early days. Most of the religious bodies gave up running their schools as the government began to accept responsibility for school education, the two notable exceptions were the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. In the deal the various colonial governments of the colonies accepted that one hour of religious instruction per day would be maintained so as to continue to build on this foundation so that ethical values could be fleshed out in our society. I should quickly note this has been reduced to one period per week: that is about 40 minutes with many conditions placed upon that religious instruction and the teaching staff.

During my years at school I believe I was taught ethics without a subject of that name. How it happened: my teachers would teach our lessons and in the teaching the big ethical question where we determine right and wrong; this was underpinned by our scripture teaching program that was done at our Government School. The monitoring and examination of behaviour in class

room and in the playground and other places was a gateway to show how to do what was right and to choose not to do wrong. When the wrong has happened we were taught to think through a better way. Is this not ethics? Our teachers were mostly very ethical and moral and taught by example.

The ethics classes are about children discussing their view of right and wrong, but the foundation for this has been taken away. The remnant of the foundation of our ethics is the Scripture classes. The St. James Centre has no strong values except anti-Christian values which are important to them. I do understand that some in society who choose a life style that is not endorsed by the Bible may take issue with the Bible and claim all who criticise their life style are their enemies. For example the Bible does not endorse the lifestyle of homosexuals and for me to make that statement does not make me homophobic and yet we are now facing anti-discrimination actions if we claim that homosexuality is wrong. The Homosexual community may criticize me for not supporting their lifestyle and call me homophobic and I have no legal defense against that and this is an ethical dilemma for a society which has lost its foundations.

All subjects must have a foundation and if there is no foundation for the ethic classes (and there is not), students will never be able to serve the country well. The direction of society and the destroying of the foundations of our society demonstrate we need to repair the foundations before we create the pathway of total anarchy. We see how we have such disrespect for the law, for other people's property and for all authority figures is steadily increasing in our society. The ethics classes will not correct this, as there is not much left of the foundation that our forefathers tried to establish.

I therefore recommend the removal of the ethics classes before more harm is done to our society. If you are unable to discontinue the ethic classes then they must be revamped in such a way that the strong Judeo-Christian foundation will be restored.

I am prepared to personally present to the committee if the committee so requires,

Thank you
Yours in Good Faith
Milton Caine