

**Submission  
No 133**

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

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Dear Members of the Standing Committee No 2.

We write in response to the invitation to respond to your inquiry on the Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011.

Our position is quite straightforward.

- (a) We entirely support the introduction of 'special education in ethics' being fully introduced to the curricula of NSW State schools, and
- (b) We deplore any move to repeal the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 that provides for the introduction of 'special education in ethics' in NSW State schools.

Our position is based on the conviction that a solid grounding in 'ethics' is fundamental at all levels of education that benefits both the individual and all of society. While it is inarguable that children should be taught ethics in the home, there is a clear need to develop this further as part of the societal growth of children. This is nowhere better and more influential than amongst the school society.

A 'trial' of ethics teaching was carried out by the St James Ethics Centre on behalf of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW in 2010. This has been widely reported as being a success by participating students and their parents. Despite that outcome, Parliament has been forced into the absurd position of a Committee having to re-examine the issues by the framing of this Bill.

It is tempting to view the present societal debate in terms of the teaching of "ethics" or "scripture" and it is unfortunate that this has occurred. Our State schools are secular, regardless of the historical introduction of 'special religious education' a long time ago and in a different society where traditional religion and religious teaching played a different role. Religious teaching also remains available to those that seek it and to parents who require it to be taught to their children – but, hopefully not at the expense of ethics teaching.

We believe this Bill to be counter to our perception of the views of society at large and we urge you to reject the proposition that the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 should be repealed.

Yours sincerely

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