

**Submission
No 433**

INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS CLASSES REPEAL) BILL 2011

Name: Mr Scott Howard & Ms Pam Murray

Date received: 24/02/2012

SCOTT HOWARD + PAM MURRAY

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Parliament of New South Wales
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

24 February 2012

To: The Hon Maria Ficarra and the members of the Committee

Submissions to Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011

We write in response to the invitation to respond to your inquiry as noted above. Our position is quite simple and clear: -

1. We fully support the introduction of ethics classes as an option for school students across the NSW primary education system;
2. We not only deplore any attempt to repeal the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 but would willingly actively campaign against it as a form of discrimination – it is entirely unacceptable that religious education (for what is a minority of students in our daughter's school) take precedence in any public secular NSW institution;
3. We regard it as entirely unacceptable (as well as discriminatory) that any child should be forced to participate in 'free pay time' in order that their fellow students might be afforded the time to participate in their parents' chosen religious education for them;
4. We also regard it as unacceptable that an alternative productive and educational ethics class should be denied students for fear that scripture students might be too tempted by the more attractive alternative – we expect parents to make these choices and their children to attend as required;
5. Indeed if the question of Ethics classes is now to be questioned – and we are incredulous at the very fact of this – then again this is discriminatory, unfair and goes against natural justice that such an enquiry is not extended to cover the question of both scripture and ethics classes;
6. If the result of your deliberations and the decision of the Parliament is to withdraw ethics classes, that there therefore should be an immediate fresh inquiry into religious classes – in this regard, in a secular education system, we do not believe there is any place for the types of scripture classes currently provided across the system other than at religious schools and whilst the same cannot be firmly believe be said for ethics classes, we are willing to make an accommodation for the benefit of religious parents if, but only if, there is a corresponding accommodation for secular parents and students. Anything short of this is entirely unacceptable.
7. We believe our view to be representative of the vast majority of the (voting) population of NSW (whether or not they are religious themselves);
8. Whilst it can be argued that ethics classes should have broad based application to all students, we are content for the choice to be available for parents and students. But, if ethics classes are removed, then we would argue emphatically that scripture classes should be reviewed and ultimately removed from secular schools too.
9. Whether any committee member is of a religious or secular conviction, we urge you to reject the proposition that the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 should be repealed. The alternative would smack of intolerance, hypocrisy and cant. Please be fair to all parents and students.

Yours sincerely

Scott Howard + Pam Murray