

**Submission
No 385**

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

Name: Ms Prue Duignan

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EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS CLASS REPEAL) BILL 2011

TO The Hon Marie Ficarra MLC (Chair)

The Hon Paul Green MLC (Deputy Chair) and Committee Members

General Purpose Standing Committee No 2

NSW Parliamentary Inquiry

Dear Hon Marie Ficarra, Paul Green and Committee Members

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit my concerns in relation to the Education Amendment (Ethics Class Repeal) Act 2011.

I will discuss my concerns according to the Committee terms of reference:

- a. **The stated objectives, curriculum, implementation, effectiveness and other related matters pertaining to the current operation of 'Special Education in Ethics' being conducted in state schools.**

Firstly, I am concerned that the ethics curriculum and objectives are not readily available for public view, and it is therefore difficult to use specific examples in this submission. I have tried several avenues to attain or examine a copy of the 'Special Education in Ethics Curriculum' but have not been able to source it. Therefore, the process of discussing the content publicly is shrouded by the secrecy about it's actual content that has been kept from public scrutiny.

Ethics, according to my understanding are rules of conduct. They are cultural and moral rules that influence our conscience and our motivations. Ethics have to be based on something. For example much of our sense of right and wrong comes from our Christian Heritage through the Ten Commandments which are presented as absolutes. However, the current trend of some is to try to deny absolutes and to water down these values by justifying mitigating circumstances and making allowances for exceptions. I am concerned that an ethics class without a foundation will be very wishy washy and subjective.

Currently, values are explicitly taught within the NSW Department of Education which implemented a program in 2004 and schools reflect these values in their policies and procedures. Hence, it may well be confusing to turn around and teach a program that has no real moral foundation (which is what occurs when God is taken out of the equation).

Consequently, I am troubled by the issues I have raised with regard to the objectives, curriculum and implementation processes, and suggest that a what I am assuming will be a vague notion of ethics without a solid foundation may be confusing and inadequate in influencing the conscience of the next generation. It may well undermine the solid values that were introduced in 2004. I note I have used the word assumptions, as I have not been able to access any of the content, objectives or implementation strategies that are being discussed.

In reference to

b. Whether the Education Amendment (ethics) be repealed

I would appeal to you on behalf of the already existing Education Amendment Act of 1990 that no other structured lesson take place during SRE (Special Religious Education) lessons. I am also troubled by who would teach these ethics lessons as they cannot be sourced from a local church, but will attract people with a hidden agenda who will be given great influence in the lives of these children.

It is my guess (as I have not been able to access the ethics curriculum) that ethics will be taught in the context of secular humanism. As such, no right or wrong can be taught. In my view it can therefore not be considered ethics at all, and in fact it will be a very unethical program.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice the issues I am concerned about. As I have stated, it is difficult to comment on something I have not viewed and therefore I am merely voicing what I think may happen. Again I would ask you to consider the points I have made and my overall **RECOMMENDATION that the Education Amendment (Ethics Classes) Act 2010 be repealed.**

FROM Prue Duignan

Teacher and SRE Teacher