

**Submission
No 220**

INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AMENDMENT (ETHICS CLASSES REPEAL) BILL 2011

Organisation: Forest Lodge Public School P&C

Date received: 23/02/2012



**Submission to NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Education Amendment
(Ethics classes repeal) Bill 2011**

22 February 2012

I am the president of Forest Lodge Public School P&C and I write on behalf of the parent community to express our deepest concerns at the proposal to remove from legislation the right and ability to run the Ethics Course as currently instantiated at Forest Lodge Public School.

I previously wrote to Verity Firth expressing our support of the introduction of Ethics Classes. That letter of support was not taken lightly by the P&C executive or our parent community.

Prior to that submission we held a Special General Meeting of the P&C to specifically discuss the introduction of Ethics to Forest Lodge. That meeting was very well attended and presentations were made at that meeting from the local Anglican minister and the Quaker scripture teacher. Interestingly that meeting was also attended by a number of the older students at the school who also expressed their enthusiasm for learning Ethics to further their nascent understanding of the topic.

The outcome of that meeting was a near unanimous vote by the parents in support of the option to teach Ethics at Forest Lodge Public School. There was only one dissenting voice.

Following that meeting, one of the parents of the school, Derek Allan, volunteered to act as the Ethics co-ordinator. He initially recruited an external teacher with experience in teaching the St James Ethics Centre's Ethics program. Over the course of last year this led to a parent being mentored and trained in the program and they are taking over the conducting of the Ethics Classes this year.

The response of the school and the students has been overwhelming. The respect that the course has received has far surpassed what I had expected. Indeed, one of the most common sentiments that I hear from parents of younger children about the course is that they would be genuinely upset for their kids to miss out on the experience if abolished and would rather envy the kids who had been able to attend the course during the time it ran. I believe that our Ethics classes have been attended by over 50 students.

The attendance at scripture at our school is quite low. We are a very mixed demographic and many of our students do not fit into the classic model of a Christian faith. We have also seen some of the younger students attending the Quaker scripture lessons rather than stay in class watching television or drawing, due to the ethical aspects and less dogmatic approach to the religion that pervades that teaching within Forest Lodge PS. This is evidence of our parents' enthusiasm to embrace the teaching of Ethics. There is a clear desire amongst the parent community that the teaching of Ethics should be extended to include younger age groups, and that it not be abolished.



FOREST LODGE
PARENTS AND CITIZENS
ASSOCIATION

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I have to admit to being at a loss as to why Reverend Nile would seek to abolish Ethics Classes. If they were poorly attended or poorly received then there may be a reason for abolishing. If the school has the legal ability to run Ethics Classes, then the actual choice to do so can be in the hands of the school and the parents. Schools where Ethics classes are not embraced will not run the classes. To remove the right to run these classes would seem to infringe upon the rights of the parents and the teachers to contribute to the direction taken in educating their children/ students.

I recognise that the history behind scripture stretches back to the time when the running of schools was taken over by NSW government replacing the church. This history does not mean that we should necessarily retain anachronistic attitudes to the education of our students.

I would also like to point out that Forest Lodge sits in a relatively marginal seat which saw Verity Firth be replaced by Jamie Parker. With over 600 parents connected with the school and with connections in to Glebe and Forest Lodge communities' and to Sydney University and RPA Hospital it would seem that our collective voice is relevant to the overall opinion of this corner of NSW.

Should any further information be needed I can be contacted by email at
or by phone on

Yours sincerely,

Chris Anderson,
President,
Forest Lodge P&C Association