

**Submission
No 86**

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

Name: Mr Donald C McPhail

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The Upper House Parliamentary Inquiry
C/- GPSC 2,
NSW Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

22 January 2012

Dear Chairman,

Re: The Ethics Course in NSW Schools

I am writing to express my opposition to the Ethics Course now being conducted in various NSW State primary schools. I have had more than twenty year's experience in teaching SRE classes in a State school and have a good understanding of the school scene.

My objections are as follows:

1. Ethics is, by definition, 'a system of moral principles by which human actions and proposals may be judged good or bad or right or wrong'. Such judging is against no fixed standard and Ethics can deliver no positives.
2. Based on ethics, each person's judgment of good or bad, right or wrong will depend on their starting point. However, this clashes with society's usual definitions of rightness and wrongness as expressed in our laws which provide a fixed base.
3. Because Ethics classes are run at the same time as SRE classes there is a likelihood that parents may see it as 'Scripture without the religion', providing good religion-free moral guidance for primary children. In the light of 1 and 2 above, this is not the case and may mislead parents.
4. A primary school population with some taught SRE and others Ethics may leave the children confused, with conflicting behavioural standards and generate arguments.
5. Faith-based Christian SRE teaching provides positive ethical attitudes versus the atheistic basis of the Ethics course taught at the same time. This time clash requires a decision which may precludes children from the ethical teaching inherent in SRE.
6. I strongly support the provision of worthwhile educational activities by the school for those children not attending SRE, as is the current requirement

I hope that the comments in this submission may be helpful to the Inquiry in its work.

Yours faithfully,

Donald C. McPhail