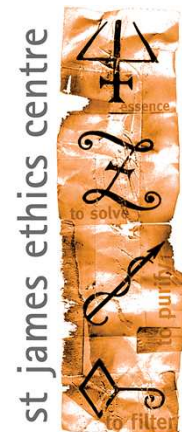


2 November 2009

The Hon Verity Firth MP
NSW Minister for Education and Training
NSW Minister for Women
Level 31, Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Minister

Further to my letter of 2 October 2009, I am writing with regard to the proposed pilot program for an ethics-based complement to scripture in NSW Primary Schools. As you are aware, our Submission proposed a 10-week trial to run over term 2, 2010 - pending ministerial approval. On behalf of a growing number of active and committed community supporters, we would like to propose a method of moving forward to ensure that the pilot proceeds in the 2010 academic year.

You mentioned publicly that you would propose to consult your curriculum advisors before making any decision. In order to avoid delay might I suggest that an immediate and preliminary meeting be arranged between Professor Philip Cam and those you intend to consult. Professor Cam, an international expert in ethical and philosophical inquiry for children, would be pleased to provide an overview of the pilot aims and objectives. As previously noted, we welcome the contribution of your Department and/or the Board of Studies in curriculum development or assessment of outcomes associated with our proposal. We also believe that this process of consultation can be arranged in order to facilitate your making a timely decision.

I appreciate your need to consider the sentiments of a select group of faith-based leaders. Their opinions are important – even when set against the evident and overwhelming community support for what we have proposed. In relation to the representations of religious leaders, you might wish to consider that:

- i. from our community consultation, that the views expressed by ICCOREIS do not necessarily represent the views of ordinary members of faith-based communities. Many faith-based respondents were shocked to learn that in 2009 those students who do not attend scripture are prohibited from instruction in ethics, morals or values. They, like others, view this as a social justice issue - **all** children ought to have the opportunity to extend ethical instruction as provided in the Department's standard curriculum.
- ii. the NSW Federation of P and C Associations, representing over 1300 primary schools, has been calling for an ethics-based complement to scripture since 2003. Seven school communities would like to be assured that the current approval process and timeframe will accommodate their participation in the proposed 2010 pilot program.

I hope you will consider our suggestion and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Longstaff', is written over a horizontal line.

CC: Professor Philip Cam, Dept of History and Philosophy, UNSW
Di Giblin, President, NSW Federation of P and C Associations

Dr Simon Longstaff Executive Director
simon.longstaff@ethics.org.au

GPO Box 3599 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia
Tel: +61 (0)2 9299 9566 Fax: +61 (0)2 9299 9477 Ethi-Call ... the good decision line: 1800 672 303
ABN 83 637 740 533 ARBN 094 609 015