

## SRE and the ethics trial

The issues surrounding this controversial trail of an ethics course, during time set aside for SRE in Government schools, has been the subject of previous articles in *TCFNews*.

The rationale is that those students whose parents have indicated that they are not to attend SRE are to be given an option of an ethics class. Many parents in this position have thought the proposal a good one because these students have no formal lessons if they are not attending SRE. On the surface it sounds a reasonable proposal. However, already the trail has been criticised because the ethics course has been offered to all students and the parents of many SRE students have chosen this class.

The main protagonists are secularists who have a hidden agenda that if they can get ethics to run against SRE in schools then everything else, other school subjects and activities, can also run during SRE time. In other words, the **real agenda is to eliminate the teaching of religion in Government schools by making SRE unworkable.**

If allowed, the demand for ethics classes in the over 2,200 Government schools would be in the thousands and there is no proposal to train volunteer teachers. There is no real interest in ethics, just wedging a subject against SRE so that others might follow and undermine SRE.

The ethics trial is against the Department's Implementation Guidelines for SRE and the key issue is whether this trail breaches the Education Act 1990. It definitely breaches the agreement between the churches and the Government in the implementation of the Rawlinson Committee recommendations for SRE on which the Department's Implementation Guidelines are based. The Government does not seem to want to answer the legal question, particularly in respect to what advice might have been received from its legal adviser, the Crown Solicitor. The matter has now been raised in the Upper House where the response was: *Any advice in relation to matters relating to education would be sought by the Minister for Education and Training or her department and would ordinarily be the subject of privilege*. In claiming "privilege", the Government may know the answer to this question and not like it. Jesus said his followers are to be the "salt of the earth". If we wish to be "salt" and preserve SRE then action is needed now to flush out the answers to these questions. Write to your MP.

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