



NEWS RELEASE

Premier of New South Wales

FIRST TIME IN 100 YEARS ETHICS CLASSES WILL BE TAUGHT IN NSW

November 25th 2009

Premier Nathan Rees has approved ethics classes to be taught in NSW schools from next year, offering an alternative to religious education for the first time in more than 100 years.

“Parents have said they want their children to be fully engaged when they are at school,” said Mr Rees.

“The current system however does not allow for educational classes for children who do not participate in scripture.

“There is real concern that students not attending religious scripture classes are missing an opportunity to learn.

“Approving ethics classes means a simple addition to classes without diminishing the importance of religion for other families.

“The Education Minister will now consult with the Teacher’s Federation, religious organisations and other groups about a trial in 10 NSW schools.

“This is not about ending religious education in our schools, it’s about providing a choice.

Mr Rees said the Government was developing a proposal with the St James Ethics Centre to conduct a trial in up to 10 primary schools over two terms in 2010.

“The final curriculum will be developed and approved by the NSW Board of Studies.

“The course will deal with issues such as fairness, bullying and honesty, as well as other topics that are age-appropriate.

“Schools that are interested in being involved in the trial will be able to nominate themselves and students can only attend with the permission of their parents,” Mr Rees said.

Education Minister Verity Firth said the course would encourage children to discuss and explore issues as a group.

“The Education Department and the Board of Studies will work closely with the St James Ethics Centre to develop an appropriate course that covers topics suitable for primary age children,” Ms Firth said.

“I look forward to confirming the details of the course after they have been worked out over the coming months.”

The President of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations, Di Giblin, said she was extremely pleased with the decision which she would bring NSW education into the 21st Century.

“This will provide students with an opportunity to examine ethics that underline their own values and reflect the choices they make in everyday life.

“It really will be good to see students able to be engaged in an activity with a purpose and something that provides them with choice.”