



FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

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MEDIA RELEASE

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***We are the largest parent organization in the Southern Hemisphere - hardly a small interest group"?***

The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW was extremely offended to read in the Sydney Morning Herald that they have been referred to as a 'small interest group coming into a school and ramping up things.'

These comments, made by Reverend Mark Hillis, acting chairman of the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education, was in response to the call for a pilot ethics/ philosophy program in Public Primary Schools. President Dianne Giblin believes that "Reverend Hillis has failed to recognize that the Federation represents parents in over 2200 schools across NSW and is the largest parent organization in the Southern Hemisphere - hardly a small interest group".

The Federations support for this program dates back to 2005 when parents unanimously supported a call for a non-religious ethics based program in public schools. The Federations pursuit of an ethics program has continued to receive the strong support of parents since that time.

Federations own research reveals that at least 59% of parents across the State support the development of an ethics based program. The research also reveals that in some schools as much as 80% of parents are choosing to withhold their children from religious based instruction.

Students who do not attend Special Religious Education (SRE) classes each week, following a parental decision to opt out, are currently excluded from undertaking any values or ethics programs due to DET policy. The Federation views the delivery of an ethics based program as complementary to the delivery of SRE currently operating in schools.

"An ethics based program would allow students previously excluded from SRE to access and examine their values and those that underpin our society" says President Dianne Giblin.

St James Ethics Centre share the Federation's position and have been conversing with a diverse community group. We congratulate and support them on the development of this ethics program in schools and urge you to join the online petition on [www.ethics.org.au](http://www.ethics.org.au). Mrs Giblin concludes "This will ensure access of all students to an opportunity to discover the values and beliefs that they live by irrespective of whether they do or don't have a theological basis to it"

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