ETHICS CLASSES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM 2011

Tuesday 23 November, 2010

Ethics classes will be available as an option in NSW public schools from next year, following the successful completion of a trial program earlier this year.

Premier Kristina Keneally and Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth announced the NSW Government has endorsed the ethics course.

The NSW Cabinet yesterday approved ethics classes after considering the recommendations of an independent evaluation of the trial by Dr Sue Knight from the University of South Australia.

From next year, schools will have the option of offering ethics courses following consultation with their school community.

The classes will commence from Term 1, 2011 and will initially be offered to Years 5 and 6 and be progressively rolled out to Years K-6.

The St James Ethics Centre will continue to provide the course and will be responsible for all aspects of its delivery, including providing trained volunteer teachers and resources.

Following the release of the evaluation report for public comment last month, 745 community submissions were received with 730 in favour of ethics continuing.

“The evidence has been overwhelmingly positive in support of ethics classes in NSW,” Ms Keneally said.

“From next year, schools can opt to offer the course following consultation with their school community.

“The evaluation report found a high level of support for the course in school communities which participated in the trial and that has also been reflected in the response from the wider community.”

Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, said the ethics course would run alongside existing Special Religious Education, known as scripture.

“The Government has no plans to replace scripture in NSW public schools – that’s never been our intention,” Ms Firth said.

“The approval of an ethics course will simply provide an alternative without taking away the importance of religious classes for other families.

“This is about the Government responding to the wishes of parents who have been asking for greater choice for many years.”

For further information please visit www.det.nsw.edu.au.