

Tuesday 17 March 2020

**Teach,
not preach.**
Secular Education Network (NZ)

Bible in schools case progresses to interlocutory hearing

This Thursday 19 March, the Secular Education Network and the Attorney General will appear at the Auckland High Court for an interlocutory hearing. The hearing will determine which evidence may be presented at the Secular Education Network's High Court case against school-based religious instruction.

The case, set down for two weeks in October, will appeal to the High Court for a ruling that religious instruction classes are discriminatory and contrary to the Bill of Rights Act, and that school time should be reserved for professionally taught education.

At Thursday's interlocutory hearing, the Secular Education Network will be arguing that its evidence from parents should be admissible, as it demonstrates the way that Religious Instruction works in practice. The organisation's arguments will be supported by a submission from the Human Rights Commission, which usually holds only an observing role.

Spokesperson Mark Honeychurch says that despite schools being secular by law, Church groups providing religious instruction use an outdated law to preach to children about Christianity in class time.

"While we are not opposed to neutral education about religion, we, along with many New Zealanders, believe that schools are for teaching, not preaching," he says.

"Our High Court case will demonstrate that it is not just a few 'bad schools', but rather failed legislation, that is the problem. However, this Thursday, the Attorney General will be arguing, in an attempt to reduce the case, that our legitimate, first-hand witnesses from across New Zealand are irrelevant or that their evidence is hearsay," he says.

Members of the Secular Education Network will gather outside the court from 9.30am this Thursday in support of the plaintiffs.

Secular Education Network Interlocutory hearing:

Auckland High Court, 10am – 1pm Thursday 19 March.

ENDS

For more information, please contact Mark Honeychurch: 021 885 216 or Toby Cooper: 021 212 1021

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