



Values, morals, and ethics in law – a case study



This sequence is intended as a framework to be modified and adapted by teachers to suit the needs of a class group.

Resources needed

- Ethical dilemma cards (one set for every 4 students)
- For a fair Australia – Case Study
- Letter from the Mayor – Template

Suggested activity sequence

Part A: Why do laws exist?

- 1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into pairs.
- 2 Ask students to discuss the different reasons laws exist.
- 3 Use a *snowball discussion* strategy to join pairs to discuss the reasons for laws and continue until the whole class comes together.
- 4 Ask: Why do laws exist?

Answers could include safety, control, authority, restriction, or to protect us from the actions of others as well as our own behaviour, to give us the freedom to do many things and to resolve disputes.

- 5 Original pairs select one card from each category and brainstorm what would happen if each law they have selected did not exist.
- 6 Invite pairs to share their predictions.

Part B: The law and ethics

- 1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into groups of 4.
- 2 Give each group a set of *Ethical dilemma cards*.
- 3 Groups decide how they could behave and how they 'ought' to behave in each of the situations described on their cards.
- 4 Groups discuss the following statement and rewrite it using real-world examples.

The **law** sets minimum standards of behaviour while **ethics** sets maximum standards. But laws are not possible without ethics. For a law to be passed or changed, a person or a group of people have to make a decision about right and wrong.

- 5 Groups share their re-written statements with the class.



Part C: Ethics, values, and the law

- 1 Students read the *Case study* and identify words they do not understand. Possible words include:
 - adventure centre
 - council
 - consultation
 - massacre
 - motion
 - stewardship
 - residents
- 2 Record the words on the board and explain their meaning.
- 3 In pairs, students share their understanding of the case study and suggest reasons why the Aboriginal group would not want an adventure centre to go ahead on the site of the massacre.
- 4 Invite pairs to share their reasons.
- 5 Provide the hypothetical situation below:

Imagine the council changes the zoning laws and approves the adventure centre. It is a year after the opening, and you are a member of the Aboriginal group watching young people doing adventure activities on the site of the massacre.
- 6 Ask the students to each write down 3 words that describe their feelings about the adventure centre.
- 7 Record a word bank of 'feelings' on the board.

Part D: Expressing views

- 1 Explain the task:

The council has agreed not to amend the zoning laws and to purchase the section of the Ajax Adventure Company's land where the massacre took place. As Mayor of the council you are to write a letter to the local Aboriginal group announcing the council's decision to purchase the site. The letter should ask for the group's advice on how the past events are to be remembered. The letter should suggest working with the local Aboriginal people to ensure that the future use of the council area is appropriate.
- 2 Students use the *Letter template* to write their letters.
- 3 Review the word bank.
- 4 Students drawn on the example from this case study to write a personal response to the following statement.

Any new law, or amendment to laws should reflect what is right and our nation's values to advance the greater good.