



Policy on Contentious Topics 2006

1. Background

- 1.1. In 2000 WADL introduced its first Contentious Topics Policy as a means by which schools in the Senior Division of the Schools' Competition would have the opportunity to debate the most divisive and controversial social issues.
- 1.2. WADL recognises that certain of its member schools and individual debaters have strong religious and ideological beliefs which make them reluctant or unwilling to participate in debates on certain topics. WADL therefore makes provision in this Policy for those schools to withdraw from debates of contentious topics. WADL hopes that in time all of our member schools will recognise the importance of debating controversial social issues in a formal and constructive manner and will be willing, and indeed eager, to participate in debates of contentious topics.
- 1.3. The following Policy is to apply to all Contentious Topics used in debates during the General Rounds and Finals of the Senior Division of the West Australian Debating League schools competition. The following Policy applies solely to Contentious Topics and does not apply under any circumstances to any other topic used in the Schools Competition.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. '*Contentious Debate*' means a debate the topic for which is a Contentious Topic.
- 2.2. '*Contentious Topic*' means a topic defined in clauses 3.1-3.3.
- 2.3. '*Finals*' means the rounds beginning with the octo-finals and concluding with the grand final of the senior division of the Schools Competition.
- 2.4. '*General Rounds*' means rounds 1 to 5 of the senior division of the Schools Competition and includes make-up rounds.

3. Contentious Topics

- 3.1. A Contentious Topic is a topic on a highly contentious or controversial issue.
- 3.2. Contentious Topics include, and are presently limited by WADL to, topics concerning **abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and prostitution.**
- 3.3. Contentious topics will not be used as impromptu topics.

4. Identification of Contentious Topics

- 4.1. A Contentious Topic will be clearly marked with an asterisk (*) on the fixtures sent to schools competing in the senior division.
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- 4.2. A topic not marked with an asterisk is not a Contentious Topic.
- 4.3. WADL must mark all Contentious Topics with an asterisk.

5. Objections to Contentious Topics

- 5.1. A school scheduled to participate in a Contentious Debate may object to the Contentious Topic the subject of that debate.
- 5.2. A school may only object to a Contentious Topic which is the topic of a debate in which it is scheduled to participate.
- 5.3. The objecting school must notify the WADL Administrator of that objection by phone and in writing not less than 14 days prior to the scheduled date of the Contentious Debate.
- 5.4. WADL will not accept any objection made later than 14 days prior to the scheduled date of the Contentious Debate.
- 5.5. The written objection must specify the grounds upon which the objection is made.

6. Response to Objections to Contentious Topics

- 6.1. If WADL receives an objection to a Contentious Topic in accordance with the procedure outlined in 5.1-5.5, WADL will substitute a non-contentious topic for the Contentious Topic. It is sufficient that the objection is made by a single school.
- 6.2. WADL will notify the Debating Coordinator of the teams competing in the Contentious Debate of the new topic of that debate by phone and in writing not less than 10 days prior to the scheduled date of the Contentious Debate.
- 6.3. The topic substituted for the Contentious Topic is final and may not be objected to under any circumstances.