

## Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025

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| <b>Submission No:</b>      | 31   |
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| <b>Attachments:</b>        | See attachment                             |
| <b>Submitter Comments:</b> |  |

This submission is from a collective of homeschool practitioners and advocates who currently serve on the Home Education Expert Group within the Department of Education.

*We support an increase in the age limit for registrations and have identified **benefits** of the proposed age increase as well as **limitations** in the current proposal.*

Page 3 of the Bill's Explanatory Notes rightly points out that an increase in age "is significant for all home education young people, and particularly for those with complex learning needs...[T]he reform eliminates a regulatory impediment to education access and supports as parents and students will maintain eligibility for student-related financial supports, student discounts and educational resources."

- Increasing the age limit to 18 will improve the situation for approximately 50% of Queensland home education students.
- **Benefits** that result from increasing the age limit are access to:
  - A variety of vocational education and training opportunities through TAFE and RTOs, such as TAFE at School, traineeships and apprenticeships, at a significantly reduced price or free.
  - University courses whilst still in high school, such as Head Start, StartQUT, JCUNow, SUN (Start Uni Now) & Enhanced Studies Program.
  - School-based competitions and challenges in a variety of disciplines that develop skills, build teamwork and/or enhance students' portfolios & resumes.
  - District and Regional Sport, which enables talented students to compete with peers at a similar level and advance their athletic development.
  - Financial support in the form of Centrelink payments (FTB, Parenting Payment and/or AIC) for eligible families and the Textbook and Resource Allowance (TRA) for secondary students, all of which support the cost of education and assist with the loss of parental income for home educators.
  - Concession transport cards upon proof of HEU registration.
  - Discounted entry to some educational or entertainment activities and venues, provided an HEU ID card can be shown to prove registration.
- Students **disadvantaged** by only increasing to age 18 are those who require more than 13 years to complete their primary & secondary education - mostly those whom the Bill's Explanatory Notes correctly identified as having "complex learning needs".
  - This may be due to learning difficulties, disability, health issues or trauma.
  - It may also be due to moving from overseas, having repeated a year in mainstream school before moving to home education or an elite young athlete extending their senior studies over 3 years to allow time for their sport.
  - In the home education sector, disability and health issues may be more predominant than in the general school population. The Queensland Government's research into home education in 2022\* stated, "Overall, 2 in 3 families indicate their child has a health issue or disability." If this data is accurate, home-educated students are more likely than their schooled peers to benefit from an extension to their schooling years in order to match their schooled peers' educational outcomes.
  - Students with complex learning needs may benefit from an additional year to reach academic milestones or for social and emotional development.
- **Suggested solutions** to cater sufficiently for those with complex learning needs:

- Increase the age to 19. Most students would cease registration at age 18 or before. However, the increase to age 19 would provide valuable extra time for the few requiring additional support before transitioning to work or further study. This would be comparable to students in mainstream schools who are able to access additional semesters.
- Utilise the approach in NSW, which allows for students to “be registered up to the age of 18 years and for a continued period, up to 2 years, in order to complete the planned educational program”.

Authorised by the following people, each a member of the Home Education Expert Group:

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\*(<https://education.qld.gov.au/schools-and-educators/other-education/Documents/research-in-sight-report.pdf>, page 2.)