

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1
Submitted by: Nicole Goring
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Submitter Comments:

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Feedback on proposed changes to the Qld Education Act
Date: Friday, 8 March 2024 6:15:40 PM

Dear Minister Bailey and the Education, Employment and Training Committee,

I am writing to you today as a constituent of Miller, a relief-teacher, current homeschooling parent of children with disabilities and someone who has been involved in the attempts to develop new alternative schools in Brisbane, to share my concerns with the proposed changes to the Qld Education Act for which you are a committee member.

I am incredibly glad to hear that the proposed changes include better protections for Indigenous and Disabled students, including the right to appeal suspensions. That is necessary. In my position as both a relief teacher and a parent of neurodiverse children I am in both teacher groups and ND parent support groups on social media. Every day I see posts from parents whose children have been sent home or suspended for reasons directly related to their disabilities, told their child must go on reduced timetabling or denied reasonable accommodation. Many of these parents have never heard of an IEP or the legislative rights their children have to reasonable adjustments. Most are unaware of the processes that schools are supposed to be following before a suspension can be issued or a child put onto reduced timetabling. They do not know that they are required to consent to reduced timetabling or that they should have signed copied of an IEP. Their children often do not have an IEP, no investigation has been done by the school to determine the child's needs (academic, social, sensory, emotional, behavioural) or strategies to support them. As such the child is constantly dysregulated and easily overwhelmed leading to increased volatility and sometimes violence, that is then punished with suspension. I also see daily posts from teachers who are unprepared to consider the impact of the environment (sensory, culture, behaviour management approaches, staffing ratios/supervision, peer interactions, tone of voice, physical proximity, and workload expectations) can have in further escalating already dysregulated students. The general consensus amongst at least the relief teachers of Qld is that all behaviour is a purposeful choice, that students are disrespectful and unruly, and that the key to addressing this is thorough fear based compliance and, draconian shame based behaviour management contrasted with rewards for the students who are able to comply 100 of the time. The concepts of fluctuating capacity, behaviour as communication and the negative impacts of fear, shame and automatic compliance are not well understood by Queensland teachers. They are continually calling for safer classrooms and better protection from assault, whilst ignoring both common sense and research that shows getting into the personal space of someone who is in fight/flight mode, is a bad idea.

At a minimum our teachers desperately need training in safe de-escalation strategies and non-violent communication. Ideally there needs to be a mass roll out of mandatory training in understanding neurodiversity and trauma, and the impact of fear and distress on the nervous system.

Since it is unlikely that will happen any time soon, the ability to appeal the suspensions that inevitably arise from continuing to escalate the distress of a dysregulated child is a welcome measure.

However, the proposed changes to the home education system are extremely concerning.

Of largest concern are the following:

1. Forcing the Australian curriculum on us as the only curriculum allowed
2. Demanding we justify how home-schooling is in the best interests of our children
3. Increasing the workload of reporting by making us report on 8 KLA's
4. Significantly altering the registration process to remove provisional registration
5. The potential impact of forced ACAR on our kid's ability to enter university from 13

The draft changes list a change in wording from: delivery of a "high quality education" to delivery of "an approved educational program" the only options listed for approved educational programs are ACARA, QCE approved subjects and Vocational Training. Interestingly schools are not held to such stringent standards as they are able to implement the Montessori, Steiner and International Baccalaureate curriculums. They also state that parents will be required to provide a rationale as to how home education is in their child's best interests. Finally they propose a change from the current planning and reporting suggestion to plan for 6 subject areas, to a requirement to plan and deliver 8 subject areas, and from reporting on English, Maths and one other subject to reporting on all 8 subject.

I understand that at least some of the motivation for this change has come because of the discovery of a cult in which the children were "homeschooled" and were found to be receiving a subpar education using an international extremist religious curriculum. I appreciate that from the perspective of government and child protection agencies it therefore seems logical to have home schoolers follow ACARA, but from the position of a homeschooling parent it is nonsensical. There are 10,000 registered homeschooling families in QLD, membership of home education support groups suggests that there are 20,000 homeschooling families in QLD. Therefore, those registered make up less than half. If child safety and educational oversight are the main concerns, then any changes to the legislation governing homeschooling needs to be focused on making homeschooling registration more attractive to families. Insisting we use ACARA and making parents fear their child will be forced into school if they are unable to prove that homeschooling is in the child's best interest to a government official and significantly increasing the workload for planning and reporting are a guaranteed way to send homeschooling completely underground. Parents will not comply when they know these changes would limit their children's education, cause undue stress for their children and increase their workload.

This is absolutely the wrong way to go about ensuring a situation like this cult discovery does not happen again.

I was involved in the working group of volunteers from the home education community to gather feedback for public consultation in 2022 when the first set of proposed changes were released. One of the tasks we undertook was tallying how many parents would either not register their children, or find ways to de-register their children and go under the radar if the changes were made. We presented feedback directly to the government and the key stakeholders in meetings and correspondence. We know, that you know that making us report more, and follow ACARA will mean the government has less ability to oversee the education and child protection of Qld children.

Yet almost 2 years later the proposed changes remain.

So why are home schoolers so against the requirement to deliver the ACARA curriculum?

Well firstly, they aren't trained to do so. Teachers go to university specifically to learn how to teach in a school using a curriculum. When ACAR was introduced there was statewide retraining to ensure all teachers were able to deliver the curriculum effectively.

It is not the role of parent home educators to deliver curriculum they have not been trained in.

And training them to do so would surely undermine the teacher training system.

Secondly, we find it restrictive and limiting.

Children are homeschooled for a variety of reasons, some of those reasons are ones that center around their parents beliefs and values and some are to do with the child as a learner and a person.

Some of the child related reasons include:

- Gifted children
- Twice exceptional children (gifted + disabled)
- Children with specific learning disabilities
- Children with intellectual disabilities
- Children with ADHD and or Autistic children for whom mainstream schooling is not working out
- Children with a history of "school can't"
- Children with significant anxiety and or sensory processing issues that make school difficult
- Children with ODD and PDA - for whom even the regular demands of life (eating, toileting, getting dressed) cause nervous system overwhelm
- These students are home educating because the mainstream school system is failing to meet their needs.

The access to truly alternative education (Montessori, Steiner, Democratic schools) in this state is extremely limited and cost prohibitive.

And whilst we are lucky enough to have a large number of distance education options many of them replicate school at home and the vast majority are religious, which means they do not suit many families.

My child is dyslexic, dysgraphic, dyscalculic, Autistic and has ADHD and Anxiety.

I am also a teacher and know that that system is woefully under resourced and under trained to support students like him.

He is 11. He is currently working on the equivalent of year 4 Maths and English.

He comes ALIVE with history. But not the extremely small wedge of history covered in the ACARA curriculum.

This is our 4th year homeschooling.

In the equivalent of his grade 1 year we did a deep dive into Ancient history, primarily Roman, and moved through to Mediaeval history. Technically it ticks the yr 1 curriculum themes of "how were people and places different in the past" but what we covered really fit better with the high school curriculum.

In his grade 3 year we used the federal election as a unit study - which whilst technically matching the yr 3 curriculum theme of "diverse communities and places and the contribution people make" fits far better with the year 6 curriculum.

He is currently officially grade 5. And whilst our 2-year deep dive into early modern global history (1700-1915) has been covering "Australian communities their past present and possible futures" and Australian colonization we have placed the Australian aspects of history we covered into the wider global picture into which it belongs. Last year we studied the US, Haitian and French Revolutions, the global slave trade, piracy, the French & American republics, Cook's other voyages, the Jacobite succession,

Gothic Art & Literature, Mozart, Charles the 3rd, the Romantic period, the development of vaccinations and inventions of all kinds from thread spinners to steam engines and electricity.

We investigated the science behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, and learned about the year with no summer. We found out that Japan had been closed to all outsiders for centuries until the 1700's. We investigated fact from fiction in Hamilton the musical and learned about the development of the Waltz. We learnt how mosquitoes helped the Haitians win their freedom and how Voodoo came to exist.

And we learnt about the first fleet, the invasion of Australia, the dispossession of indigenous peoples and the early struggles of colonial Australia. MacArthur, Macquarie, Cook, Banks, etc.

But that was only a fraction of what was happening in the world at the time, and it is so limiting to teach history in the siloed and de-contextualised way that the Australian curriculum forces.

Forcing ACARA on my child would destroy his love for history, the biggest passion in his life. It would turn him off learning and stifle his drive. There's a good chance he will pursue a career in history and the education he has received at home without the limitations of the Australian curriculum will set him far above his peers in his understanding of global geopolitics throughout history and the global timelines of history. The knowledge he is developing at home without the Australian curriculum will be far more attractive to university history departments and museums because it is so much more well-rounded and in depth.

Limiting him to the ACARA curriculum could significantly limit his career opportunities.

Within the homeschool community needs and skills vary greatly, it is not unusual to see students who are undertaking tertiary level subjects in one KLA and working at a remedial level in another. University admission at age 13 is common.

For families where multiple children of different ages are home educated the flexibility to develop our own educational plan not-restricted to meeting ACARA checkboxes means they can develop a single educational plan that works for their whole family, streamlining their time.

For families of students who have been traumatised by their school experience (and the Federal Senate Inquiry into School Refusal, shows just how many there are) the ability to unschool is the only thing that allows them to re-engage with education.

Autistic and ADHD children are passion motivated, the ability for their parent to tailor their education around the current hyperfocus means supporting their differences, whilst insisting they follow a one size fits all curriculum forces them to be expected to perform like neurotypical students.

The first round of community consultation with the Homeschool community made our reasonings against ACARA and additional reporting obligation very clear. Those reasons are valid. Many would argue that ACARA is a backwards step from a "high quality education" (our international rankings are certainly nothing to crow about) and our children are homeschooled because the school system including the National Curriculum failed to meet their needs. Now the Queensland Government seems determined not to listen to our voices. Sadly that means any gains made for disabled students via the changes proposed for school suspension transparency will ultimately be diminished by the losses for neurodivergent students in the changes to homeschooling.

I hope that the committee and the Qld government as a whole will engage with community consultation in good faith, listen to the homeschool community about our concerns, and work with us to develop collaborative solutions that meet our needs, whilst meeting the government's need for a sense of greater oversight. We have a lot of

ideas on how this could be achieved in a mutually satisfactory way.

Kind Regards,

Nicole Goring



From: [Nicole Gorring](#)
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to the committee: Subject: Advocating for Flexible Education Options and Curriculum Reform
Date: Monday, 11 March 2024 3:32:25 PM

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the inflexibility and overcrowded nature of the Australian Curriculum, particularly in how it impacts children's engagement and learning outcomes. As a concerned citizen and advocate for educational reform, I strongly believe that there is an urgent need for more flexible schooling options that prioritize the diverse needs and interests of students, rather than adhering to an outdated and irrelevant curriculum.

The current Australian Curriculum, with its rigid structure and overcrowded content, often fails to resonate with many children and can lead to disengagement from the learning process. It is evident that a one-size-fits-all approach does not effectively cater to the unique learning styles, interests, and abilities of every student. Furthermore, the sheer volume of content within the curriculum can feel overwhelming and arbitrary to students, making it difficult for them to see the relevance and meaning behind what they are learning. This can result in a loss of motivation and enthusiasm for learning, which ultimately hinders their academic progress and personal development. Additionally, there is a pressing need for curriculum reform that prioritizes essential skills and competencies relevant to the 21st century. Rather than adhering to a curriculum that feels arbitrary and disconnected from real-world contexts, we should focus on cultivating critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and communication skills that are essential for success in today's rapidly changing world.

Considering these challenges, I urge the committee to explore alternative schooling options that offer greater flexibility and autonomy in curriculum design and delivery. By providing more choices for families and educators, we can create learning environments that are better aligned with the diverse needs and aspirations of students. At current the proposed changes to the Education General Provisions act, limit the choice of home educators to use alternative curriculums including Montessori, and Steiner, both of which school are able to use. Many homeschooling families use international curriculums purpose built for home education, or to support specific learning disabilities. Additionally, the proposed changes do not seem to provide any clarity on the definition of a school under Qld Law, which makes it impossible for

homeschool co-ops and day programs to ensure they are in compliance. This limits opportunities to homeschool and distance education students. There also do not seem to be any concessions made to aid in the establishment and continued survival of new non-state Alternative schools and Distance Education Schools. Despite living in a globally connected age, Queensland Distance Education schools are required to have physical premises that meet the requirements laid out in the Planning act even if they only offer 100% online delivery. This unnecessary requirement has caused many attempts to establish distance education schools to fail. There is no change listed to the application, approvals or assessment of non-state schools either. The discussion around non-state schools in Australia tends to focus on church and GPS schools, those with money and power. It ignores the plight of parent and teacher formed alternative schools who are funded entirely by fundraising, personal contributions and fees in advance. The founders of such schools take on huge amounts of personal risk and fight for years against legislation that hampers them at every turn to provide educational choice and best practice education settings to Queensland families. Sadly the vast majority of proposed alternative schools never see fruition, and those that do are often unfairly targeted by NSSAB and shut down. Taken together, this Bill restricts educational choice and access to educational best practices for Queensland families.

In conclusion, I call upon the committee to champion educational innovation and reform that empowers students to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world. By embracing flexibility, relevance, and student-centered learning approaches, and expanding access to a variety of educational models, we can create a more inclusive and responsive education system that prepares all children for lifelong success and fulfillment.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Nicole Gorring

Concerned Citizen and Educational Advocate

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