

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 54

Submitted by:



Publication:

Attachments:

Submitter Comments:

I am very concerned about the proposed amendments to the education bill that has recently been presented to parliament. As a home educating parent, I do not support some of these changes that have been introduced and I am worried about the impact that they will have on my family and the homeschooling community.

I am particularly concerned about Sections 217(1)(b), where it discusses using the Australian Curriculum as a basis for defining a 'high quality education', and Section 217(2)(c), where it outlines extremely inefficient reporting requirements. Also, the guiding principle that home education should be in 'the best interest of the child' is concerning.

Who has the child's best interest at heart more than their parents? They are my children and I love them more than a government department ever could. I see this section of the act as confusing, highly subjective (what one person deems as 'best interest' could be completely different to someone else), and unnecessary. **It is already a requirement to submit a plan outlining the child's educational goals and support** – including their learning environment and social opportunities – surely this is enough to see whether the child is receiving adequate support from community networks and in their home environment. Further, this seems to imply that students in schools are 'safer' than those at home. Anyone who has worked in a school will tell you that there are numerous students who are neglected or abused – **the method of education does not change that sad fact**. We have also met home educators who left school because of misconduct by teachers and students that they felt was not handled appropriately. Yes, there are processes in place to deal with these situations, but they are often lengthy processes and may not immediately remove the child from danger. They are often expected to go back to the classroom with the person who has caused them harm. Personally, one reason we started home educating because my child was anaphylactic. **I did not trust the school to be able to provide him the level of supervision that he would need to keep him safe**. Later, we decided to continue with our other children because we could see the social and educational benefits of homeschooling. Other parents may keep their children home because they want to *avoid* bullying, antisocial behaviours, anxiety, and other negative effects of the school environment. Most parents research education options for their children and many decide to never send their child to school, but to tutor them at home. Homeschooling is a valid educational option and not always done as a 'last resort'. It should be for the parents to decide what is in the best interest of their own children, not a third party.

In response to Section 217, I am deeply concerned about using the Australian Curriculum as a definition of a 'high quality education.' **This curriculum was designed for the school system, where students are age-segregated and move through their education in a linear fashion**, with different teachers every year who may not know their history. My children, however, have the same educator each year, who knows each child's history better than anyone else in the world. I know which topics they have previously covered. I know what interests them and how to engage them. Practically, **implementing the Australian Curriculum presents numerous difficulties in a family setting**. For example, last year my children were aged six, eight, nine, and ten. We studied animals. We learnt about food webs, classification of animals, life cycles, breeding animals (including basic genetics), the animals in our local area, and animals in other environments. My six-year-old fulfilled the Biological Science requirements for the Australian Curriculum in his year level, plus for most other primary school grades! If I were to

follow the Australian Curriculum, it would hold my children back from the incredible learning opportunities they currently have. **There may be some home education students who return to school with gaps in their learning, but I would suggest that their numbers are few, and - since this happens in schools anyway - it is not a good reason to introduce this requirement.** Subjecting all home educators to a standardised education because of a minority is unwarranted and is detrimental to many students who are **already proven** to be receiving a 'high-quality education' via the current method.

Planning a learning program will also be increasingly difficult and inefficient. In Section 217(2)(c), it states that my yearly report will now need to include evidence of learning for all subjects. **Currently, I need to provide annotated samples and evidence** of how we have implemented the learning program in English, mathematics, and one other subject. The annotations are quite detailed. This is already so much more than I did for my students as a teacher. When I taught in schools, we were provided with pre-approved comments that we would cut and paste into the comments section of the child's report card. We did not make personal statements to describe each child's learning journey. **I find the current level of reporting to be rather absurd, let alone the proposed changes to increase this to include every subject in the Australian Curriculum.** I do not see how this process will make the reporting process more efficient for the Home Education Unit. Instead, I think they will have trouble absorbing the cost of implementing such stringent reports. Also, the amount of time parents spend reporting will take away from the time they spend actually educating their children. It also will make any difference to how well the child is educated. I don't see that this amendment will benefit *anyone*, so I'm not sure why it was even suggested to begin with.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about the proposed amendments,

Regards,

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