

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 67
Submitted by: Beverley Paine
Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Submission re Home Education proposed provisions in EGPA review
Date: Wednesday, 13 March 2024 4:59:15 PM

Dear Committee members,

I am writing in my capacity as The Educating Parent, owner of the largest homeschooling and unschooling support group in Australia (currently 43,000 members), and as someone with four decades experience providing support and information enabling parents to begin and continue home educating their children.

I am concerned that some of the proposed amendments to the **Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024**, in particular **Clause 68 Section 217**, place an inequitable and unnecessary burden on Queensland home educating families.

To date, tens of thousands of home educating families have been reviewed by the Home Education Unit and successfully continued educating their children using individual learning plans, accessing a wide variety of educational resources and materials, and using a range of different of approaches and pedagogy.

Requiring families to now restrict their children's learning plans to fall within the scope and sequence contained within ACARA's Australia Curriculum will severely limit the opportunity for many of these children to continue to educationally flourish and thrive.

The Australian Curriculum is a document to guide teaching within school environments. It was never designed to operate in a home educating learning environment. It is not suitable for learning situated in the home and community.

Recognising this, no other state or territory has mandated the use of ACARA's Australian Curriculum in home education legislation.

The QLD HEU is known throughout the Australian home educating community as having the most rigorous recording and reporting requirements.

Many Queensland home educating families have tailored their learning plans to meet their children's unique needs, many because their children's needs were not being met in the school system. If the Australian Curriculum was appropriate for these children, they would have thrived at school.

As The Educating Parent I see many comments such as this every week: *"I have an autistic son and his school and support person from NDIS have advised us to homeschool him."*

It has become all too common now for schools to advise parents to home educate, because the teachers know they are unable to meet the child's needs in the classroom. This is an admission that the methods and curriculum they are using have failed.

It is unreasonable to impose these same methods and curriculum on these home educating families.

It is unreasonable to place these families in a position where, continuing with the methods and curriculum they have already chosen for their children, and are using successfully (as demonstrated by HEU's approval during annual home education reviews), may put them in legal jeopardy, by breaking a law that restricts them to using a curriculum that has previously failed their child.

This is untenable. The proposed change is naturally causing great stress and unnecessary uncertainty for these families.

Home education registration already requires families to provide "high quality" learning plans, opportunities and environments that are "in the best interests of the child". HEU has been approving these for decades.

There is no need to legislate ACARA's Australian Curriculum for home education registration.

I home educated my children between 1985-2004 and my children are now home educating my five grandchildren. We are an intergenerational home educating family. The freedom to use resources, materials and methods that suited the individual nature and needs of each child was key in our children's success in their adult lives.

Please listen to the many home educating voices in Queensland asking you to remove this amendment.

Yours sincerely,

Beverley Paine



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Submission No: 67
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Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Several of my homeschooling friends who live in Queensland have contacted me asking me to write a submission regarding the legislative amendments to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I wish to extend the comments I emailed to eetsc@parliament.qld.gov.au last week. I home educated my children between 1985-2004 and my children are now home educating my five grandchildren. We are an intergenerational home educating family. The freedom to use resources, materials and methods that suited the individual nature and needs of each child was key in our children's success in their adult lives. We home educated at a time and with no support when very few families across Australia were doing it. We had to create our own curriculum, write our own learning plans, lessons and activities. I now encourage and help other families to do this because it is the best way to meet their children's individual needs. For 35 years I have been providing support and information to hundreds of thousands of families seeking to home educate their child through my website and online groups.

I am admin of the largest online support forum for home education in Australia (43,000 current members). A large percentage of these cite failure of schools to meet their children's developmental and educational needs as the reason for considering home education, with an increase in the number of neurodivergent families turning to home education in desperation as a last resort. Incidents of bullying in schools and high levels of anxiety are also cited regularly as reasons for choosing home education. Many parents feel that schools are no longer safe or healthy spaces for their children. I am concerned that some of the proposed amendments to the, in particular Clause 68 Section 217, place an inequitable and unnecessary burden on Queensland home educating families. To date, tens of thousands of home educating families have been reviewed by the Home Education Unit and successfully continued educating their children using individual learning plans, accessing a wide variety of educational resources and materials, and using a range of different of approaches and pedagogy. Requiring families to now restrict their children's learning plans to fall within the scope and sequence contained within ACARA's Australia Curriculum will severely limit the opportunity for many of these children to continue to educationally flourish and thrive. The Australian Curriculum is a document to guide teaching within school environments. It was never designed to operate in a home educating learning environment. It is not suitable for learning situated in the home and community. Recognising this, no other state or territory has restricted the choice of educational pedagogy to strictly the use of ACARA's Australian Curriculum in home education legislation. The QLD HEU is known throughout the Australian home educating community as having the most rigorous recording and reporting requirements. Many Queensland home educating families have tailored their learning plans to meet their children's unique needs, many because their children's needs were not being met in the school system. If the Australian Curriculum, which is what Queensland schools are compelled to use, was appropriate for these children, they would have thrived and STAYED at school. As The Educating Parent I see many comments such as this every week: "I have an autistic son and his school and support person from NDIS have advised us to homeschool him." It has become all too common now for schools to advise parents to home educate instead of continuing to send their children to school because the teachers know they are unable to meet the child's needs in the classroom. This is an admission that the methods and curriculum they are using have failed. It is an unreasonable demand to now impose these same methods and curriculum - which have not thus far resulted in a "high quality education" or been "in the best interests of the child" on these home educating families. It is

unreasonable to place these families in a position where, if they continued to successfully home educate using methods and resources that the HEU have already deemed suitable and appropriate during the registration and annual review process, may put them in legal jeopardy, by breaking a law that restricts them to using a curriculum that has previously failed their child. This is untenable. The proposed change is naturally causing great stress and unnecessary uncertainty for these families. Home education registration already requires families to provide "high quality" learning plans, opportunities and environments that are "in the best interests of the child". HEU has been approving these for decades. There is no need to legislate ACARA's Australian Curriculum for home education registration. Please listen to the many home educating voices in Queensland asking you to remove this amendment. In addition, many home educating parents have raised their concern with me regarding the proposed insertion into Clause 18, Section 7 regarding Guiding principles: "best interests of the child" and ensuring the child receives a "high quality education" (defined in Clause 68 as restricted to ACARA's Australian Curriculum). At present it is a parental responsibility to determine what is in the best interest of their children. Legislating this clause takes that right away from parents. There is no detail given in the amendment saying who or how 'the best interests of the child' will be determined. Also, for two decades QLD home educators, unlike those in other states, have been able to withdraw their children and prepare a learning plan to fulfil their registration requirements without risk of their child being truant - provisional registration covered this. It is something we in other states have wanted. The omission of Clause 60 Provisional registration is a backward step and puts unnecessary stress on QLD home educating families. This 60 day period allowed families to determine their children's learning needs before purchasing curriculum materials or committing to a home education program (many of which offer free trial periods). This is seen as beneficial, easing the transition from school to home, and enabling families to make contact with existing home educating networks in their area to access socialisation and educational opportunities for their children. In some states school principals grant a temporary exemption from attending school for four weeks while the home education application is being processed. In other states children are often compelled to obtain medical certificates to cover the period of absence, an unnecessary and expensive waste of time, both for the family and the family doctor. The removal of Provision registration will result in unnecessary work for the school chasing children who are not truanting. Reporting requirements vary across Australia but most of us in the home educating community agree that the burden placed on QLD home educators is already onerous, with the necessity to provide detailed paired examples of learning in Maths, English and 1 other subject. The amendment proposed to Clause 61 Section 208 will see this increase to all 8 curriculum subject areas. This will increase the workload not only of the home educators preparing the report, but the officers working in the Home Education Unit who have to assess them. Who will be funding this extra workload? Will the HEU's workforce be increased to cover it? And it is unnecessary - as shown by the fact that every year thousands of families registrations are renewed based on the evidence provided, which has clearly demonstrated home educating students are currently already receiving 'high quality education'. Thank you for allowing me to expand on my original submission and for considering my experience in your deliberations.