

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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The Honourable Members of Parliament,
Parliament House
Queensland, Australia

Dear Members of Parliament,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to homeschooling regulations in Queensland, Australia, as outlined in the recent bill.

As a parent who has chosen to educate my children at home, I feel compelled to address the potential implications of these changes on families like mine.

Please see my concerns outlined below.

1. Logical Incompatibility with National Curriculum:

First and foremost, I must emphasise the illogical nature of mandating homeschooling families to adhere strictly, or even in part, to the national curriculum. It is essential to recognise that many families, including mine, have opted for homeschooling precisely because the traditional education system, along with its prescribed curriculum, failed to meet the unique needs of our children.

Forcing a curriculum that has already proven incompatible into our homes not only lacks a reasonable agenda but also exhibits a concerning desire for control. It is imperative to understand that this approach is both unattractive and potentially dangerous for any governing body to pursue.

I do agree that certain subjects should not be compromised on, those, for the most part, being Math, English, and Science, however, even these subjects should never be mandated to be taught in a certain way, at a particular speed. Some children can take over a week to fully understand one basic concept, and because of the overbearing curriculum teachers in mainstream schools must follow, these children are often simply left behind. By removing the requirement to follow a national curriculum, we allow these children to actually learn in a style and at a pace that respects their diversity, in a way that has been tailored for them by those who know them best, their parents.

2. Unreasonable Reporting Requirements:

Furthermore, the requirement to report on every subject in exhaustive detail is simply unreasonable. Unlike full-time teachers in traditional school settings who are provided with "no contact time" to compile reports and assessments, homeschooling parents often do not have the luxury of such dedicated time and assistance. Many of us are managing homeschooling responsibilities alone while also juggling household duties and caring for multiple children. The suggestion that we should somehow find the time to fulfill extensive reporting requirements after creating a curriculum, teaching multiple year levels with (often) varying learning difficulties without adequate support is not only impractical but also fundamentally undermines the autonomy and flexibility that homeschooling offers.

Would the Queensland Government care to provide a subsidy enough for every homeschooling family to afford the assistance of a qualified teaching aid to ensure all reporting demands are met? That might put a dent in your budget.

Fanciful 'solutions' aside, this approach would once again impose a rigid school system methodology onto families who have intentionally opted out of a system that has already failed them. Personally, I do believe that reports on Math and English should be expected every year, but after this, the choice of which other subject to report on is an ample example of work and a manageable task for homeschool parents to undertake.

3. Ambiguity and Interpretation Concerns:

Additionally, the broad and ambiguous terms used throughout the bill leave significant room for interpretation, which is deeply concerning. Such ambiguity is often exploited by governing bodies to push through agendas without transparently outlining their full intentions. This lack of clarity raises serious questions about the true motives behind these proposed changes and undermines the trust between homeschooling families and the government.

4. Insensitivity to Unconventional Learners:

Lastly, but possibly most importantly, I must highlight the glaring oversight in the proposed changes, particularly concerning unconventional learners. Many homeschooled children, including those with developmental delays, learning difficulties, mental disabilities, or behavioural concerns, do not fit into the conventional student mold. By pushing for changes that cater primarily to a traditional student experience, the bill demonstrates a concerning lack of sensitivity and understanding toward the diverse needs of homeschooling families. This oversight is ill-conceived and honestly borders on outright discrimination and, moreover, threatens to force our children back into the very pigeonholes from which we have sought to rescue them.

A combination of timing and overreaching policies makes it starkly obvious that this bill has been drawn up in response to the significant influx of parents withdrawing their children from the mainstream education system. Demonstrating that you seem to have taken these unenrolments as an affront, rather than how they should be perceived, which is a clear and undisputed failure of the public and private schooling system for atypical learners.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the proposed changes to homeschooling regulations in Queensland. These changes to a thus far outstanding system not only fail to address the unique needs of homeschooling families of all diversities but also risk infringing upon our rights and autonomy as parents.

The homeschooling community is a peaceful and law-abiding demographic. We could have revolted against the schooling system when we observed our children struggling, demanding fundamental changes to a system that only benefited 'easy learners'. But instead we chose to quietly and peacefully take our children out of an environment we identified as toxic for them and to instead bear the responsibility of their education on our own shoulders, in a tailored method that spoke to our children's needs. We homeschool not because it's convenient, but as a means to protect and nurture our children from a system that was failing them.

However, if these overreaching proposed guidelines are enforced, it may lead to a significant erosion of trust and cooperation between homeschooling families and the Australian government. And please keep in mind that when parents feel as though their children are being targeted, they tend to stand up.

Allow us to continue to educate our children in the gentle, individualised, and yes, sometimes unorthodox, ways we have been, it's working. It's working for your school system, it's working for our children, it's working for our community.

In the poignant words of Thomas Bertram Lance, "*If it ain't broke, don't fix it.*"

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns, constructive criticism, and suggestions. I trust that you will carefully evaluate the implications of the proposed changes and strive to protect the rights and interests of all families involved in homeschooling.

Sincerely,
Chantal Wolf,
Australian,
Mother,
Home Educator.