

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 107  
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**Submitter Comments:**

## **Submission on Proposed Changes to Home Education Requirements**

Dear Mr Mark Bailey, Mr James Lister, Mr Joe Kelly, Mr Nick Dametto, Mr Barry O'Rourke, and Mr Brent Mickelberg,

As an ex-teacher turned home educator, I write to express my deep reservations about the proposed changes to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, specifically Clauses 60, 61, and 68: the proposed changes to home education requirements, reporting, and the removal of provisional registration. I appreciate your attention to the concerns raised by the home education community.

Having taught both prior to and during the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in schools, I bring a unique perspective as an educator who has experienced firsthand how curriculum rigidity impacts teaching, as well as the interest and engagement levels of students. In my years as a teacher, I observed my students having to gloss over topics they were genuinely interested in because the curriculum demanded adherence to specific topics. This not only killed their curiosity but also significantly lowered their engagement. The implementation of the Australian Curriculum further restricted teachers' freedom and agency, negatively affecting the overall learning experience for both educators and students.

My experience as an ex-teacher aligns with my current role as a home educator: when students have the freedom and choice to explore topics of interest at their own pace, their curiosity and engagement thrive. The proposed changes risk replicating the very issues I witnessed in the traditional school system. Forcing a curriculum onto my children, who are thriving, engaged learners, will without a doubt stifle their enthusiasm and love for learning, which has been nurtured by the freedom to explore subjects at their own pace and delve into real-world, authentic learning experiences.

The Home Education Unit (HEU) conducted research in November 2022, which concluded that the majority of home educating families do so because they can provide their children with "more personal, individual learning at their child's pace" (Department of Education, 2022). The report identifies key benefits cited by home educating families, such as "less stress for the child (and therefore the family), more tailored learning solutions, and greater flexibility in what and how learning occurs" (Department of Education, 2022). My reasons for home educating echo the sentiments found in research from the general home educating community.

The Australian Curriculum, in its current form, is lacking in meaning or relevance for many children in the home education setting. It does not take into consideration the developmental readiness of individual children, hindering their optimal learning experience. Home education allows for a personalized, interest-driven approach that fosters a genuine love for learning. The Australian Curriculum, on the other hand, is prescriptive and limiting for home educators, written as a minimum standard document for trained teachers, not for parents, and takes away our choice and agency. It is an incredibly complex document tailored to educating children in schools, and many schools employ curriculum specialists to interpret and implement this document. Home educators do not have access to this level of expertise, and it is unreasonable to expect them to use this

document in planning and reporting. The imposition of a national curriculum threatens to undermine the very essence of home-based learning.

One example of this is that as an active participant in the homeschool community, we participate regularly in multi-age learning co-ops and group activities. We regularly capitalise on instruction and lessons from other parents, community members and experts in their fields. Sometimes, this sparks interests and passions within our children and we are able to go away and deeply explore an area of interest. Enforcing the Australian Curriculum will severely limit this opportunistic learning and stifle the ability for us to form multi-age groups as the topics they will be investigating would be dictated according to their year level.

Furthermore, it is worth questioning why many teachers are leaving the system to home educate their own children. The committee members should consider why the school system isn't designed for individuality and instead focuses on standardization. As a former teacher, I have observed the challenges within the system that lead educators to seek alternative education models that better cater to the unique needs of their children. This raises a crucial question about the adaptability and effectiveness of the current education system. Your attention should be focused here, not on forcing home educating families to adhere to the same standards as schools.

The removal of provisional registration also raises serious concerns. Requiring an immediate educational plan removes the grace period for parents/carers who need to promptly withdraw their children from school due to urgent circumstances. This places children at risk of continued harm, such as bullying, by forcing them to remain in the school system until the parent has had time to develop an appropriate yearly plan.

In terms of financial implications, the lack of clarity surrounding funding allocation is troubling. Will funding be provided to parents for training in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum at home? How will funding be allocated to the Home Education Unit (HEU) to effectively monitor the educational plans submitted, especially considering their current capacity to read only 10% of submitted reports? With the number of home educating families expected to increase, this issue demands urgent attention and clarification. Will funding and training be provided to home educators to help them understand, plan for, implement and report according to curriculum requirements?

Moreover, the proposed reporting requirements, specifically reporting on all 8 Key Learning Areas (KLAs), are overly onerous on parents and unnecessary to prove that parents provide a high-quality education that is in the best interests of their children. Such requirements are burdensome and fail to acknowledge the diverse ways in which successful home education is conducted. The imposition of standardized reporting goes against the very principles of flexibility and individualization that make home education effective.

Additionally, I kindly request your advocacy for a more comprehensive consultation process with the home education community to ensure that any regulations developed accurately reflect the diverse and successful approaches to home-based learning.

In conclusion, I must emphasize that these changes are NOT in the best interests of my children, nor in the best interests of home educating families as a whole. I urge the

committee to reconsider these proposed changes and listen to the concerns of the home education community. Preserving the freedom of choice and flexibility in learning methods is crucial to nurturing a lifelong love for education in our children. I hope that the committee will take into account the unique strengths of home education and work towards regulations that respect the diverse and successful approaches of home-based learning.

Thank you for your understanding and commitment to addressing the concerns of the home education community. I look forward to your support in ensuring that any changes in regulations are well-informed, considerate, and mindful of the implications for families and the Home Education Unit.