

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 114
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed changes in homeschooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow, plan and report specifically to the Australian Curriculum, which in turn increases the workload of planning and reporting for families, and the workload of the Home Education Unit. My 10 year old son and I began our homeschooling journey at the beginning of 2023, when he would have been starting Year 4. From Years Prep-2 he attended a nearby state school, and for Year 3 we enrolled him in a different state school after it became apparent that his individual learning needs were not being met, and this was causing emotional issues for him. It is worth noting that this was not his or my only concern around attending school, but it is the most relevant for this topic. This was not resolved with the change of schools, and my son began to beg me to home educate him part way through Year 3. After lots of research, I decided we could give it a go and when I gave this news to my son, he exhaled deeply and rested his head on my shoulder and looked at ease in a way I had not seen him for a very long time. Over the past 14 months, my son has learned to feel comfortable again without the external pressure he felt at school. His emotional regulation has improved drastically. He enjoys learning again, in ways that actually suit him, and diving deep into topics that he is interested in. Deciding to homeschool, and knowing that we have the freedom to teach and learn in these ways, has been life changing for us. So many families we have met on our journey have similar stories. So, speaking as a homeschooling parent, I firmly believe that enforcing a standardised curriculum, and increasing the planning and reporting workload of parents would actually not be in the best interests of many home-schooling children, or their families, and would in fact be detrimental for many. The essence of homeschooling lies in the freedom and autonomy that it affords children. Families are able to teach and learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. By mandating a curriculum, my children's (and many others) autonomy and ability to pursue education in a way that best suits their needs would be impeded. One of the primary motivations for homeschooling is to provide our children with a learning experience that is tailored to them and that fosters their intellectual curiosity and allows them to learn at their own pace. These new regulations threaten to restrict this flexibility and stifle their natural drive to explore and discover the world around them. Enforcing a one-size-fits-all curriculum fails to recognize the diverse interests, talents and abilities of children. It overlooks the fact that every child is unique and may thrive in different subject areas or learning environments. It also minimises the fact that humans are life-long learners. Yes there are ideal times to learn some things, but the most ideal time to learn is when the person is ready to do so, and this often does not fall in line with the Australian Curriculum. Many homeschooling children, including my own, are unable to cope with the rigidity and pressure of a school environment, for many different reasons. Being educated at home in a space where they feel safe to explore their own interests and be themselves without fear of judgement; where they have the autonomy to eat, drink and use a bathroom when needed, to move their bodies as and when they need to, allows them to thrive in ways that a school simply cannot for some children. These children and families are, in many cases, already suffering from stress and feelings of failure. Adding regimented requirements to their load cannot be in their best interests, for so many reasons. Additionally, I believe it is worth noting that teachers have spent many years undergoing study and training to deliver the Australian Curriculum, including ongoing training and development days. Schools and teachers are provided with funding and resources that many homeschooling families do not have access to. This does not limit our ability to provide a high quality education, but it does mean that it will be provided differently to a school setting. Even with these resources and

supports, many teachers feel overwhelmed with their workload, without access to the same funding and training, it seems unrealistic to enforce the same expectations and expect this to be in the best interests of children and families. The additional workload on the Home Education Unit, and the associated costs to the government, must also be considered. It should not be asked of families to feel the pressure to make arbitrary reports and plans that no one will have the time to properly review. In summary, I believe that the proposed changes to adhere to the Australian Curriculum, and to increase the workload of planning and reporting, would not only undermine the fundamental principles of homeschooling but also limit my children's ability to learn and grow in a way that honours their individuality. I do not believe that the increased cost and workload to the Home Education Unit are justifiable for the negative outcomes for families. As a homeschooling parent who is deeply invested in my children's education, I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and instead focus on supporting families in providing the high quality education that we all want for our children. Thank you for considering my concerns. Sincerely, Homeschooling Parent