

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you as the members of the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee. I am deeply concerned about the proposed Bill – Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. In particular, I am greatly concerned that this Bill would see all Queensland homeschooling families, forced to cease delivering a personalised learning plan tailored to their individual children's needs and replaced with having to implement the standardised Australian Curriculum.

As an Early Childhood Educator and a homeschooling Mum of 5 children, I would like to point out the major contradictions that the Australian Education System implements onto the children of Queensland. The current standard of education for our Children starts out immersing them in the Early Learning Years Framework from 6 weeks old up until the commencement of primary school age entry. This framework is designed on the principle that, and I quote, "The diversity in family and community life in Australia means that children experience belonging, being and becoming in many ways. They bring their diverse experiences, home languages, perspectives, expectations, and cultural ways of knowing, being and doing to their learning. Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. This means that cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual and creative aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated." This principle, though likely not consciously known to my fellow home schoolers, unless they too are Early Childhood Educators, is in many ways, the exact approach that they take to delivering their children a high-quality education. Strong learning foundations built around the acknowledgment of each individual child's way of belonging, being and becoming. However, once a child enters the Queensland schooling system, they are delivered a standardised, one size fits all, Australian Curriculum. I am left baffled as to why the standard differentiates so drastically from age 4years to 5years. While I do not doubt that at one point in time, the Australian Curriculum delivered a high-quality education, it now remains nothing more than a blanket set of expectations for what every Australian child should be taught, regardless of where they live, their background, their heritage, their learning abilities, their interests and their passions. This means every single child is stamped with the same expectations, regardless of their diversity.

This leaves me to ask the very important question...How does the Government justify delivering such an individualised, supportive and inclusive way of learning to our pre- primary school aged children, then turn right around once our children are to be enrolled in Prep, to say, that this holistic and supportive way of teaching our children, is to be replaced with an often non-inclusive, one size fits all, education model?

Further to this, I would like to highlight the way in which clause 68 part 5, contradicts clause 68 part 1. Part 1 specifically outlines that the education of a child should be suitable with regards to the child's age, ability, aptitude and development; whereas part 5 requires parents to deliver the Australian Curriculum. This removes the parents' capacity to educate their own children appropriately, when their child's capacity is out of scope with said curriculum. Many children are deemed behind the national average for their age, whilst others far exceed that of their peers. Forcing these children to follow the Australian Curriculum would be disadvantageous to both spectrums of children.

I would also argue that while all children are entitled to a high-quality education, perhaps the government needs to look at the definition of what deems an education, high quality; and whether the Australian Curriculum actually allows for that. The question has to be asked why are so many teachers, families, parents and students leaving the current education system?

In section 7, chapter 9, part 5, it now states that home educating parents will have to demonstrate that homeschooling is in the best interest of their child/ren. I am failing to see how that would align with a

parents' right to choose? How would a board of strangers, fairly and accurately be able to conclude, what is in each individual child's best interest? This seems like a tremendous over-reach.

Further to this, should a parent send their child to a private school they are not held to learning the Australian Curriculum; the private school is legally within their rights to offer their own preferred curriculum, in line with their own philosophies. If the delivery of a different curriculum is acceptable in this instance, why should homeschooling parents not be granted the same freedom to implement an alternative curriculum?

Another concern that I have with this bill, is that it implies that homeschooling parents are now going to be required to give a written report on every subject in their child's plan, rather than just 3 subjects. Whilst I agree that parents should be providing a report to document their child's journey and learnings progress/outcomes, can the department really handle such an intensely large volume of these reports on 8 KLA's from over 10,000 current registrations? That seems like an enormous amount of paperwork for both parents, who often homeschool multiple children and for the Department, who are already swamped.

Having a child who struggled in his first year of schooling in a wonderful private school, we were constantly told he was behind his peers. He received extra help (multiple times a week) in smaller group settings, for an entire year. We did his homework, we supported him emotionally and mentally, and yet he was still deemed "behind", for an entire year. It was pegged to us that he would just go into the next grade, behind, and just continue to receive extra support in smaller group settings. He spent an entire year learning to read and still could not read come the end of that year. Having siblings who struggled with mainstream schooling, who fell behind, who got bullied for being behind and who took massive hits socially, emotionally, mentally and academically, it was clear to my husband and I that we did not want our son to suffer the same experiences. We decided that I would quit my job as an Early Childhood Educator, we would become a one income family and we would pour our hearts and souls into teaching our son. Not only teaching him, but nurturing him, supporting him, mentoring him and giving him a one-on-one education tailored to his strengths and supporting and growing in his weaknesses. Respectfully, that, is a quality education! Following a standardised curriculum, a one size fits all curriculum, that is not tailored to individual children's needs, that has and continues to fail kids year after year; there's just no comparison in my opinion. You cannot fit every child's individual learning needs and abilities into one box. Having the freedom and flexibility to tailor a child's education; what they learn, how they learn it, where they learn it, at what level they learn it, is again, in my opinion, everything!

I know I have taken up a good amount of your time, so I will leave you with my final thought. The education we receive as children is what will inevitably either make us or break us. It shapes us and determines who we become and what we contribute to our society.

I urge the Committee to genuinely consider my concerns and the concerns of my fellow homeschooling families. The Homeschooling community needs to be heard loud and clear on these matters, as we are the ones directly affected by said legislative amendments. We are the parents in the trenches. We are passionate about our children's educations and are in most cases, sacrificing a lot, to ensure that our children do receive the highest of educations and become upstanding citizens within our society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Megan Hodgson

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