

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 150
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to you regarding my concerns in relation to the proposed changes in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, pertaining specifically to homeschooling. As a home educating parent, I do not support some of these changes that have been introduced and I am concerned about the impact that they will have on my family and the broader homeschooling community. I am particularly concerned about the proposed requirement for home educators to use the national curriculum (ACARA). The Australian Curriculum is an extensive document that has been tailored for the education of large groups of children in a school environment. This is not in alignment with or conducive to a 1-on-1, practical and hands on learning style which is generally at the core of homeschooling. It is this 1-on-1 basis where the parent is acutely aware of the abilities and interests of their child and therefore know which areas to explore or improve if required. The freedom to choose our own curriculum, programs and learning styles is the foundation of a high quality and lower stress education that is tailored specifically for our own children. Additionally, requiring homeschoolers to follow the Australian Curriculum is restrictive considering that homeschoolers have access to a multitude of successful programs and resources from all over the world. My family has only just begun our homeschooling journey this year with our 5 year old. This was a researched and measured decision with the best interests of our child's well-being (including educational, mental and emotional development) at the forefront. The proposed amendments requiring homeschoolers to use ACARA will not support my child's individual educational needs. This will negatively impact his quality and content of learning in addition to his eagerness to learn. I'm concerned that the proposed changes in the legislation has been introduced without proper transparent consultation with current homeschooling families and I hope that you will take my feedback into consideration. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns. I look forward to hearing your response about this important issue. Sincerely,

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Dear Committee members, I am writing to the Committee to include additional concerns in relation to the proposed changes to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. My initial submission focused on my disagreement with the requirement for home educators to use the Australian Curriculum. My family has just begun our homeschooling journey this year with our 5 year old. We have chosen to homeschool our child from the beginning for many reasons including to support his emotional needs, learning styles and to align with our values. My primary concern is regarding the guiding principle of Section 7 (da) - to ensure that homeschooling is in the best interest for the child - and how it could potentially be interpreted. Who decides if homeschooling is in the child's best interest? How will this be determined? What are the guidelines? Currently, there is no detail in the legislation as to who in the government would determine this and how it would be decided. This new clause will impinge on the parent's right to decide if homeschooling is in their child's best interest, particularly those who homeschool by choice as opposed to out of necessity. Are there safeguards in place for well-meaning parents so this guiding principle can't be misconstrued or misused? Removal of section 7(da) is needed for transparency, fairness and freedom of choice. There has been discourse that insertion of Section 7(da) is a response to the inquiry into the suicide of a child who was homeschooled. This terrible loss is not a reflection of homeschooling but rather a failure of government departments who were already aware of this child. Singling out this child's tragic death to justify disproportionate and unnecessary legislation changes is highly concerning. Why are the suicides of children within the school system being ignored? Why don't all parents have to prove that their particular choice of schooling is in the child's best interest? Thankfully, there has been a recent decline in youth suicides and this coincides with a dramatic increase in the uptake of homeschooling. Youth suicides have decreased from 37 deaths in 2018/19 to 20 deaths in 2022/23 while registered home education has increased from 3,411 children in 2019 to 10,048 children in 2023 (statistics from the Queensland Government's website). Homeschooling prevents harm by providing a safe family environment and one-on-one support for the child. Collectively, we choose to homeschool because our children's mental health and well-being is at the forefront of our considerations. I have seen firsthand within my local homeschooling community the positive mental and emotional changes in children who have started homeschooling specifically due to school-based trauma, lack of support at school or bullying. Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration. Sincerely,