

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

**Submission No:** 151  
**Submitted by:** Nedizha Thierry  
**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public  
**Attachments:** No attachment

### Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, RE: Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Homeschooling Legislation  
I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the proposed changes to the legislation which governs homeschooling in Queensland, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. As a homeschooling parent, I firmly believe that these changes would undermine the very reasons why many families, including mine, have chosen homeschooling as the preferred mode of education for our children. The essence of homeschooling lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. By imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes would impede my children's autonomy and hinder their ability to pursue education in a way that best suits their needs. One of the primary motivations for homeschooling is to provide our children with a personalised learning experience 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 inclination to explore and discover the world around them. Furthermore, enforcing a standardised curriculum fails to recognise the diverse interests and talents of homeschooling students. It overlooks the fact that every child is unique and may thrive in different subject areas or learning environments. By imposing rigid educational requirements, we risk depriving our children of the opportunity to pursue their passions and develop their full potential. The standardised curriculum in Australia, ACARA, is a system that is cited to have consistently allowed Australian students to decline against international education rankings. In essence, a failing system which is seeing children spend an increasing amount of time at school for declining outcomes. Homeschooling parents have access to the ACARA framework and can choose to utilise it, either entirely or parts therein. However, many, including myself, would describe ACARA as outdated, stifling and also becoming increasingly loaded with concepts and teachings that are not in alignment with individual family values. Homeschooling allows self-paced learning with extension and innovation in subject areas that inspire and excite.

I am in favour of reporting requirements for home schoolers and that it is imperative that all children receive a high-quality education. However, the additional reporting requirements proposed in the bill would generate a vast body of work for the Education department that would only increase if the current growth trend of home education was to continue. Would the Home Education Unit be justly resourced with adequately qualified personnel to assess the influx of reports efficiently and effectively? Will all reports be read and assessed in their entirety or will only a sample be taken to assess the standardisation of implementation, rendering parents' highly valuable time squandered on navigating a futile mountain of red tape. I currently homeschool my two children, receiving no government funding or assistance to do so, and live in a rural area. I chose to homeschool for a multitude of reasons which include, but are not limited to, the distance to our local school and the correlating travel time in either private car and/or bus, concerns about the teaching time/resources being shared with high needs students, exposure of my children to undesirable behaviours of other students and my views of the ACARA curriculum. My children do not face learning barriers and would simply be a number in the mainstream system. I have elected to take up my right to homeschool as I can provide my children with a childhood that is filled with opportunity to learn and grow with vibrancy and a rich variety of experiences alongside developing their intellect to levels superior to many whom are the product of the mainstream education system. In essence, these proposed changes 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 and creativity.

As a homeschooling parent deeply invested in my children's education, I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and instead focus on supporting families in providing a rich and diverse educational experience tailored to the needs of each child. Thank you for considering my concerns.

To the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee,

In response to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

In light of the report on “Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland 2022-2023”, presented to Parliament on 14 March 2024, which reports on the suicide of a child registered with the Home Education Unit, I would like to submit the following for the committee’s consideration.

**\*This is persecution of a portion of the COMMUNITY for the failures of GOVERNMENT.\***

I would like the recipients and committee members to ask themselves if there is motivation behind a great portion of the proposed changes to the legislation pertaining to home schooling that is to use the homeschooling community as a scape goat, to take the blame for the bureaucratic system not responding in a timely enough manner to show sufficient government supports were provided to the young person who so tragically took their own life?

The report details that a number of government agencies had involvement with this child and their family including Queensland Health, Child Safety and The Department of Education where, at the date of this poor being’s death, the child was registered with the Department’s Home Education Unit (HEU). The child had, for a period, been an inpatient in a Queensland Health Mental Health facility and referrals had been provided to the Department of Child Safety. Sadly, at the time of death Child Safety had not yet commenced their Investigation and Assessment Process.

While the report does not disclose a complete transcript of the child’s medical history and interactions with health services and the Department of Education the following are easily deducible:

- The child had a history of mental health issues including self-harm and suicidal ideations
- The child was at one point enrolled in mainstream school

As a parent I am horrified to read that there were concerns that the child’s care needs were not being met. I am outraged that the department of Child Safety had not even commenced their due process to ascertain what assistance might be needed by this child. As a taxpayer I question how a referral to Child Safety from a reliable source such as a mental health facility had not yet been attended to, while a second referral to a Department of Education outreach service had reportedly not yet been initiated. Within two weeks of discharge from the mental health facility the child took their own life. An undeniable tragedy but the root cause of which cannot legitimately be traced back to homeschooling.

Multiple government departments, multiple interactions, zero action. The decided outcome; to target the homeschooling families. There is no evidence to support that had the proposed changes to the legislation been in place that those changes would have prevented this child’s death. It is also worth noting that when comparing data available from the

Queensland Family and Child Commission and the Queensland Education Department, Queensland's rates of youth suicide have seen a decrease in the same period that home education registrations have seen a marked increase.

If this truly sad and appalling case is the rationale for amending the legislation pertaining to the delivery of home education with a focus to uphold the "best interests" of the child then a great deal of additional clarification needs to occur. How will what is in the child's best interest be gauged? Who/what will have the authority to rule on this or to question the choice to homeschool parents have made? What avenues of appeal will be available? At a cost to whom? What will the recurrence of addressing/proving this be? I note that the changes to Section 7 of the legislation which deals with the 'best interests' matter is not discussed in the Policy Objectives set out in the bill.

Has the committee considered the additional costs to police such a ruling? What department will bear the cost of additional personnel to assess homeschooling families with the rigor justly due to the proposed responsibility of assuring a 'child's best interests'? The Department of Education which is severely lacking in funding to support its current core business of providing a quality education to those students already enrolled in its schools as well as suffering a shortage of qualified teachers? Child Safety which is already buckling under extreme backlogs allowing concerns such as the child noted in the report to go unassessed and unassisted until it is too late? The Police who are already understaffed and too busy dealing with youth crime? Queensland Health?

The homeschooling community is a community of parents and caregivers who are seeking the best outcomes for their children, and those in their care. We cannot be unjustly framed for or by the actions of extreme outliers. Families who are exercising their right to provide a rich and vibrant home education experience for their child must not take the fall for the failures of other Government departments to act in the best interests of children in Queensland. We as home educating caregivers ARE acting in our children's best interests. The proposed over-reach is a distraction tactic to take the focus off the Government's own internal failings.

I do support changes to section 206, allowing a child to be registered as a home-schooling student until the conclusion of the year they turn 18. To allow for consistency with students in mainstream schooling.

As a home educating parent, I do not support the proposed amendments to the legislation which affect the following sections:

- Section 7
- Section 211
- Section 217

The forced implementation of the Australian Curriculum lacks any supporting evidence that it is superior to any other option available to Queensland parents. There is no factual evidence that supports that standardized implementation of the Australian Curriculum will result in guaranteed education levels that are superior to what is achieved now through home education. The Australian Education system is one that is cited repeatedly

as consistently allowing students' learning outcomes to decline against international education rankings. In essence, a failing system which is seeing Australian children spend increasing time at school for declining outcomes. Without evidentiary proof that the Australian Curriculum is a superior avenue of education when compared to what 80% of home educating families in Queensland are implementing there is no viable argument that legislative enforcement is justified.

Will homeschooled students be eligible for an ATAR if homeschool educators are to report progress aligned with the syllabus? With tertiary institutions increasingly recognising the 'quality education' of homeschoolers, welcoming students without a QCE or ATAR score, the enforcement of the Queensland senior syllabus seems a moot issue. If tertiary providers and employers do not require a QCAA Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), why should our homeschooling 'seniors' be forced to follow the ACARA curriculum to prove 'quality education'?

By suggesting that the parents of the ten thousand children currently registered with the Home Education Unit, as well as the thousands not currently registered, are simply able to pick up the Australian Curriculum and sufficiently deliver it in a home environment as well as competently compile the reporting as the proposed changes will require completely devalues the entire teaching profession in Queensland. Qualified teachers have four years of tertiary training to this end. Has the Queensland Teacher's Union been consulted and provided feedback specifically on the changes to Section 217? It was clear in the Public Hearing on 18 March that the Teacher's Professional Association of Queensland (TPAQ) had not been consulted. In a time where Queensland schools are experiencing critical teacher shortages how is it good policy to legislate their qualification into meaning no more than a HECS debt and piece of paper?

By this stage of the review process, and with access to the technological and communication advancements of the modern age, it should be very clear to the members of the committee that consultation regarding the change proposed to the regulatory oversight of home education in Queensland has been grossly inadequate. To address this, I implore the committee to move to remove all sections of the bill that reference home education from consideration, apart from Section 206 (raising the age to 18) until a thorough and genuine consultative process can be undertaken with stakeholders of the homeschooling community.

The current Queensland Government has several objectives to which the implementation of this bill could be argued in opposition to. Firstly, good jobs, reliable international research has generally shown that homeschooled students end up with better employment prospects than non-homeschooled students. Secondly, investing in skills, students in schools are limited to the skill acquisition that the administrators have previously deemed suitable with limited ability to explore alternative and additional options. Thirdly, better services; educating for the future, homeschool students enjoy the flexibility to respond to any shifts, changes and advancements in trend or technology at a much greater rate than the school system. The decentralised, customisable, adaptable and portable nature of home education is arguably a much more futuristic model of education than a standardised curriculum methodology. And finally, a great lifestyle, if parents and students of the homeschooling

community were adequately consulted with, it would be clear that home educating families enjoy the flexibility and cohesiveness that the homeschooling lifestyle choice affords.

I am a home educating parent by choice. Our family's home education journey commenced in 2023 with one currently registered child and a pre-school aged sibling. I undertook copious amounts of research before making the choice to not have my children enter the mainstream schooling system. My children do not face any learning barriers, either neurological or physiological. I am confident that the educational experience that could be provided by the schools available in my rural area is not superior to the intentional, individualised, and varied learning experience I provide through home education without implementing the Australian Curriculum. My children are learning at their own pace in a flexible and nurturing environment. As a tertiary qualified professional with a background in Health Science and Commercial Compliance I have elected to forego a career to be a homeschooling parent. My choice to home educate has been made with my children's best interests at the forefront, it is not the easy way nor was it influenced by a social media trend as was suggested in the public hearing on 18 March. To suggest such demonstrates a clear lack of engagement with and understanding of the significant cohort of the population the legislation would impact, not to mention a very unprofessional, derogatory and immature viewpoint. I put forth that the data that this unsubstantiated hypothesis was based on was misconstrued data gathered in 2022 by the Education Department not around why parents are choosing to homeschool but which avenues homeschooling parents source their information regarding homeschooling from.

This correspondence has been sent to the Committee responsible for reviewing proposed amendments bill to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 as a submission and as emails to the offices of the Minister for Education, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Minister for Education and Mr Jim McDonald, Member for Lockyer.