

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my distress about the recent proposed education legislation that was introduced to the Queensland parliament on the 6th of March 2024. https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/bill.first/bill-2022-052?fbclid=IwAR1hZpIH9dxzn3QS7Jab-G4XshmLcX1MbiTjWMn_KrhFYb67bq15CvrMgg. I feel that as a member of the community, it is necessary to bring to your attention the erosion of freedom and the subsequent detriment to many student's academic and mental health outcomes. The impact of these proposed laws has implications both for the freedoms of parents as well as the opportunities of students within our community. I am a wife and parent of three children. I am currently a small business owner as well as a home educating parent. I was home educated myself and I now have a special interest in education, with a Bachelor Degree in History and a Certificate in Montessori Studies. As such these proposed changes are important to my family and my passion for quality education and instilling a love of life-long learning in all children. The proposed legislation raises several pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed. My main concern about the legislation is the requirement for parents to show that homeschooling is in the "best interest of the child". While of course we all want the educational decisions for every child to be in their best interest, who gets to decide whether or not home educating is in the best interest of the child? A government employee? A committee? A piece of random legislation? Can we not trust caring parents to be making educational decisions for their children that are in their best interest? The nature of choosing to home educate, requires significant sacrifices on the part of the parents both financially and physically. Sending children to school for most of the hours of the day to be taught and supervised by someone else is considerably easier than choosing to home educate. My experience in home education circles is that the overwhelming majority of parents are home educating because they feel it is either the only option, after trying school, or the very best option for their child(ren). This proposed change is a dangerous overstretch of the government's power. When the government is granted control in parenting decisions, the rights of the parent are lost to the "system". This leads to invasive oversight, excessive regulations and loss of personal choice. The government can never replace the love and concern of an engaged parent and allowing the government to decide what is in the best interest of a child instead of the parent is dangerous to the free world as well as to the wellbeing of children. I am also concerned about the legislative change to require home educators to follow the Australian National Curriculum. The curriculum is designed for a classroom setting and does not take into account the diversity of children within the home education community. The essence of home educating 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 our children's autonomy and hinder their ability to pursue education in a way that best suits their needs. As a parent who is committed to providing my children with a quality education, I am passionate that these changes would harm the education of many children. Also the proposed legislation Clause 68 Section 217(1)(b) states that "the education program used for the child's home education must --...(ii) be consistent with approved education and training program". How will "consistent with" be determined and enforced? What will these changes actually entail in terms of implementation. The vague nature of this legislation leaves the interpretation and implementation of them open in a way that I believe is unfair and disconcerting to the home educators. Also the definition of approved training program does not include uni; however there are many cases of home educated students attending uni courses before

the age of 17. This could potentially prevent students from reaching their potential and slow their educational journeys. As an active participant in the homeschool community, we participate regularly in multiage 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. I believe most home educators are overall reasonably satisfied with the current laws and processes as they stand. There is no justifiable reason for these major alterations. I am also concerned about the lack of transparency and public consultation that has happened prior to this legislation being created. As active stakeholders in the education system in a democratic country, it is imperative that the voices of educators, parents, students and community be heard and taken seriously when any significant decisions are made that impacts the education of children. Sadly, these proposed legislative changes target some of the most vulnerable in our society. Home educated families are often making financial sacrifices making them less affluent than others. There are also a huge proportion of home educated children who have special needs and are being home educated as a result of the schools not meeting their unique needs. Recent research done by the Home Education Unit (2022) showed that two out of three home educating families have chosen to do so as the result of a disability or health issue. There is also a growing proportion of children being home educated as a result of "school can't"; this is often the result of years of bullying, sometimes including instances of assault or worse. These children are finding safety and healing in their homes and for these children it can be critical that their parents have the freedom to make decisions about what is best for their children to help them heal and move forward in life. I know that as a caring representatives, you would want this for these children too. We all want children to be safe, have access to quality education and grow to be well rounded members of the society. I fully support legislation that ensures home educated children are safe. These proposed changes unfortunately go beyond the scope of government jurisdiction and are not in the best interest of the parents and most importantly the children they are meant to help. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns. I look forward to your response and to further dialogue on this important issue.