

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 184
Submitted by: Selena Wright
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Ms Farmer,

I am a wife, a mother, a stepmother, a grandmother and a teacher. I chose to give up teaching to stay home to teach my child because the system has failed her too many times. She did not fit into the boxes that teachers are taught to squeeze children into. Students have to conform to a curriculum that does not allow for any child to be a free thinker, passionate about certain topics or learning at a pace that does not meet the standards deemed 'normal'.

I have been made aware of some legislative changes to the Education Act regarding Home Education. An email from my Home Education Regulatory Authority has given me some information regarding the proposed changes which are of great concern to me and many other homeschooling families.

- It clearly states in the parent resource area of the ACARA Curriculum is for teachers in a school environment and as such is tested as a cohort ensuring consistency amongst schools. It is not designed for 1:1 homeschooling lessons.
- There are several educational curriculum providers who follow pedagogical philosophies which differ to the ACARA Curriculum. These providers include, but are not limited to Montessori, Steiner, Unschooling, Nature Schooling methodology and are equally recognised by our regulatory authority HEU QLD. These specific alternative curriculums cater to the children who have different learning styles, learning abilities and interests. Specifically ACARA recognises Montessori National Curriculum Framework allows for comparable educational outcomes for English, Mathematics, History and Science. It also recognises activities undertaken can have a general comparability with Australian National Curriculum.
- I am a trained Early Years teacher. I spent many years honing my craft in Early Childhood settings before completing a Bachelors of General Education. Why should parents with no training be expected to follow such a complicated curriculum as ACARA without formal training could also teach following ACARA in the school environment. Thus eliminating the need to accumulate massive HECS debts obtaining an unnecessary teaching degree. While I am trained in the national Curriculum I do not believe it is the best system of teaching, nor do I think it is comparable to other nations curriculum or outcomes.
- As homeschooling parents, we submit our teaching plans, yearly reviews and reporting before approval for another year is granted. Families following alternative teaching plans cannot be approved under ACARA regulations, therefore this is discriminatory towards students seeking alternative learning

paths based on interests, learning capabilities and medical constraints. In fact, I feel there is more scrutiny on the reports, plans and educational outcomes for our children than those in mainstream schools.

- ACARA currently has 8 KLAs. Who will be responsible for reading, assessing, reporting and monitoring the 10.000 plus students currently enrolled in homeschool education? And how will those of us teaching neurodiverse and disability affected children have modifications adapted and accepted in a timely manner?

My two biggest concerns remain the paragraph referring to “in the best interests of the child”. The second being the mass exodus of families from the current education system. Under the current registration system parents are required to submit their teaching plans, letters of support from registered health professionals and parents outlining why they need to home school, how they plan to homeschool, what resources they will use, what their child's schooling environment would look like in regard to academic, social and mental environments. Parents do not choose to homeschool on a whim. It is a well considered, well thought out planned decision which is considered to be in the best interests of the child. So who will be making the decision now? Who else will know my child's struggles better than myself? Who else knows what their daily workload limits are? Who knows my child's interests better my myself and our family?

Secondly, I am confused as to why there is no targeted, specific investigation as to why home education is increasing at such a rapid rate. A systemic failure of the current system has led to huge increases in families feeling the need to withdraw their children from mainstream schooling for their own wellbeing. This is due to many factors including increased systemic bullying in schools, increased unrealistic workloads for both teachers and children leading to burnout, reduced supports for children with additional needs including closures of special education units within schools. The new inclusive policies are breeding resentment, not resilience. There is resentment from the “normal students” towards those who require more help because the class has to keep stopping to go over topics again and again, there is resentment from teachers about their increased workload which was previously supported by special education teachers and aides within the school, there is resentment from the additional needs students towards the ‘normal’ students for the bullying, put downs and general feeling of inadequacy leading to school refusal. This is the situation that needs your attention and scrutiny, to be investigated and reported. Parents are advocating for their children when the system has broken them, does not meet their learning styles, learning needs and abilities. There appears to be a correlation between the increased numbers of homeschooling families and the perceived need to make the parents conform to an

education system which has already been proven unsuitable. Is the government afraid of losing control, or has it been proven that the system is not as successful as it seems?

I implore you to consider hosting a committee consisting of parents who are homeschooling and listen to the reasoning behind their decision. At the end of the day, it is our right as parents to educate our children in the manner we decide is 'in their best interests', and we all plan, teach, report and assess their education development in accordance with the HEU QLD using the pedagogy and curriculum best suited to their individual learning paths and interests, chosen by parents in the interests of their child.

ACARA does not teach my child life skills or give them experiences in nature or museums. It does not allow for her interests in art or sewing. It does not cater to her intellectual impairments and give her adequate time to learn at her own pace. It does not cater to her need to be able to concentrate for small amounts of time. It does not recognise her ability to remain calmer and more open to learning in a nature environment such as reading under a tree or learning about tides and fish species on a river excursion but self-paced, interest led pedagogy strategies does.

I have the full support of my daughter's allied health team (Cardiology, Paediatrics, Orthopedics, Rheumatology, Respiratory, Genetics, Physio, OT, Psychology and Speech Pathology) in our decision to remove our daughter from school and follow our own curriculum. Many have commented they have never seen her so relaxed, happy and confident in herself. Her team have encouraged her to extend her interests in healthy nutrition and cooking skills, her research skills to find information of interest to herself and her engagement in her lessons. She is always happy to share and show them her work from her maps, powerpoints, essays and reading reports. Since we began homeschooling she has made improvements in her reading, her maths and science skills. She is a more engaged and energetic learner who will be disadvantaged by being forced to return to a curriculum which does not suit her learning style. My daughter feels :SAFE: and that is the best thing we can hope for.

I look forward to your response,

Selena Wright

Dedicated Homeschooling Parent