

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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. Dear Committee Members, I write to you as a seasoned educator with almost two decades of experience in Queensland's educational system, spanning mainstream and independent schools, as well as involvement with homeschooling students for the past several years. Given my extensive background, I feel compelled to address the proposed education bill recently introduced in parliament. Firstly, I wish to highlight the disparity in documentation requirements between traditional school settings and homeschooling. While teachers in schools are not mandated to develop year-long plans covering multiple learning areas, such expectations are already imposed on homeschooling families in Queensland immediately upon enrolling. How much more documentation is required from these families? Administrative requirements in schools is a large part of why many teachers in Australia spend an average of 5 years in the system before moving on. I question the necessity for such exhaustive documentation as it stands already, let alone piling on more unnecessary stress on homeschooling families. Furthermore, the assessment framework for homeschoolers necessitates demonstrated progress in core subjects, namely Maths, English, and one additional learning area annually. This reporting process, though vital for monitoring academic development, already imposes a significant administrative burden on families. Expecting parents to undertake more responsibilities akin to trained educators without adequate support or guidance is unrealistic and may inadvertently discourage homeschooling participation. Is this the goal?

Moreover, it's crucial to recognise that the Australian Curriculum, designed primarily for classroom instruction, does not adequately cater to the diverse needs of homeschooling families, particularly those with neurodivergent, gifted, or special needs children. The inherent inflexibility of the curriculum fails to accommodate negotiated pedagogies essential for engaging certain students effectively. Study after study shows children learn differently – freedom within pedagogy and an ability to look at the individual child in order to teach them best, is, and always has been, the answer. Australia already has an extremely limited variety of options to suit our children's needs – especially for the disabled, neurodivergent, gifted and talented, and higher needs students. Now there is a proposition to take these already limited options away. What for? I for one would like some clarity as to why this bill is even being proposed. The proposal to eliminate the 60-day provisional homeschooling registration certificate raises concerns, particularly regarding vulnerable students experiencing adverse circumstances such as bullying, anxiety, or mental health issues. This interim period serves as a vital lifeline, providing families with essential support during challenging times. Removing this safeguard without adequate alternatives may leave vulnerable students without necessary protection and exacerbate their difficulties. Without this option – schools will face more and more formal complaints, and non-compliance will be at an all time high. In essence, the current bill appears to overlook the unique needs and challenges faced by homeschooling families. It fails to acknowledge the diverse educational requirements of students and the importance of flexibility in accommodating varied learning styles and preferences. As an advocate for equitable education, I implore you to reconsider the proposed bill in light of these concerns. It is imperative to ensure that legislative measures align with the principles of inclusivity, support, and respect for parental autonomy in education. Respectfully, Hayley Clearihan Bed Primary and BA Psychology