

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 273
Submitted by: Terrence Healion
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in our state. As a constituent, a concerned grandparent and a member of the community, I believe it is crucial to voice my apprehensions about the potential impact of these changes on my grandchildren, [REDACTED] (the oldest who is far more skilled at reading and comprehension than I was at even 16 leaving Kedron High), [REDACTED] (shows great interest in acquiring knowledge already) and [REDACTED] (even at 2 he is interested in starting his schooling journey after watching his older siblings), and there is another one on the way.

I am deeply impressed with the progress of my grandchildren involved in the home schooling system as it stands. I have been out on home school outings with other families and witnessed how interested they are in learning. I must say I am impressed. The parents are to be commended for their skills and the way they personalise their teaching to suit each child's ability. I cannot understand why there is a proposal to make things unnecessarily more complex and time consuming. After discussions with my daughter and looking into the changes proposed, I wish to make some points.

Overall, I do not believe that these changes will result in a higher quality education for home educated students, or increase their wellbeing. I perceive that it will unnecessarily increase the workload for home educating parents, with no apparent benefit for the children or family.

The proposed legislation raises several pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed. Firstly, the general principles being reworded to state that home educators will need to prove the suitability of home schooling for their family. The vagueness of this rewording leaves it open to interpretation and is above and beyond what is required of any other education choice in Queensland. If a family chose private school, an alternative school, or a school that is outside their catchment, this kind of justification to the Department would not be required, as it is assumed parents have their child's best interests at heart. It is overreaching to demand this justification of home educators.

Secondly, the requirement of the strict and exclusive adherence to Australian Curriculum is largely problematic. The Australian curriculum has been designed for the purpose of standardising education across schools in Australia, including to prepare students for standardised testing. Home education is individualised education, with no standardised testing. So while it is a resource and tool that home educators can use,

the requirement to follow it as the ONLY approved program for them is unreasonable, limiting and unnecessarily laborious to implement in a home school environment.

Thirdly, while I agree that parents should be required to provide a report, to demand that parents prove progress across all 8 KLAs (Key Learning Areas) for every student, every year, is not logistically feasible. Is the Home Education Unit equipped to handle this volume of reporting, considering there are over 10,000 students registered with them? I do not believe that requiring parents to do more reporting than classroom teachers will result in any improvement to the quality of education or wellbeing of students being home educated in Queensland; in fact, due to the labour-intensive nature of the reporting suggested, it will likely have a negative effect on both of those things.

Lastly, I believe that removing the provisional registration period will have a negative impact on the wellbeing of students in Queensland. Parents who are making the choice to enrol in HEU suddenly are generally doing so as the result of a traumatic situation and need this period to pull together a conclusive and well thought out plan. To require these families to produce a plan that strictly adheres with ACARA essentially overnight is wildly unreasonable.

Overall, I am concerned that the legislation has been introduced without proper consultation with current home schooling families and I hope that you will take my feedback into consideration. In light of these concerns, I urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritise the best interests of our students. For education to be inclusive of all students, I believe it is important to understand the reasoning behind the education decisions of the families who decide to educate their children at home, and how they go about ensuring the education provided is of high quality.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns. It is my hope that, going forward, this legislation can suit the needs of all students across Queensland. I look forward to hearing your response about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Terrence Healion

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