

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

As a home educating parent, I do not support some of the changes proposed by Di Farmer MP, and I am writing to express my concerns regarding these changes, specifically;

1. That home educating families must follow the Australian Curriculum;
2. That home educating families must report on the Australian Curriculum across all subjects;
3. That provisional registration is to be removed;
4. That heavier regulation will result in non-compliance / not registering;
5. That there has been no consultation with Queensland home educators.

1. My concerns relating to mandating home educating families to follow the Australian Curriculum

- Many home-educated students are working several levels below or several levels above their age-allocated grade, including my son.
 - My son was behind in his reading and spelling when I removed him from mainstream school. We spent a number of years working below his level, revising phonics and learning to decode words in order to help him understand. He is now in Year 8 and above average at his spelling, reading and vocabulary.
 - This same son showed an interest in robotics last year, and I taught him Year 10 level python coding to enable him to participate in a robotics competition.
- The Australian Curriculum is a one-size-fits-all approach. This means it fits every student partially but no student completely. When mainstream students fall too far outside these “sizes”, they are provided with an Individual Education Program (IEP) to cater for their needs. This proves the Australian Curriculum is not a high-quality education for every student, even those in mainstream schools. The only way to guarantee a high-quality education is to create an individual learning plan for each student that caters for all their individual learning, social, educational and emotional needs. Every home educated student already receives this.
- Home educating families often utilise project-based or interest-based learning to engage their children and spark a passion for learning. This often results in highly driven, motivated home educated students who enjoy their schooling.
- Home educating families often participate in group-learning activities involving different ages. Often this means older children are helping younger children, which is beneficial for all involved.
- Home educating families are able to increase and decrease the workload for their children according to their children’s capacity. This means that children with medical or learning issues can be catered to.
 - When my other son began home educating, he was highly anxious, withdrawn and disengaged. By lessening his workload initially, I was able to reduce the stress and expectations of him, allowing him to heal. He has slowly developed a love of learning and is now excelling at his school work and is above standard in Maths and English.
- Some senior home educating students are already undertaking University courses as part of their studies.
- The Australian Curriculum is not considered the best in the world, and many home educating families utilise overseas curriculums that are better suited for their child’s individual learning styles.

All these things would not be possible if home educating families are forced to follow the Australian Curriculum. Please explain how mandating the Australian Curriculum will benefit my family.

2. My concerns relating to mandating home educating families to report on the Australian Curriculum across all subjects:

- The decision to home educate is not a decision that is taken lightly. We are not supported financially in any way, and I already spend many hours every year complying with the registration requirements for the Home Education Unit. Requiring us to report on 8 subjects will require days or even weeks to complete, with the expectation that reports will exceed 20 pages. I feel my time would be better spent educating my children.
- The Home Education Unit is already struggling with the increase in registrations. How will they find the time to review these extensive reports? In the 2022 review, they proposed to read only 10% of reports, which I feel is very disrespectful to home educators. So much time wasted on a report that is unlikely to be read. If the HEU are to only read 10% of reports, then a fairer approach may be to only those 10% of home educators to provide a report.

Can you please explain how my children will benefit from me spending weeks writing reports and plans, rather than spending time home educating them?

3. My concerns relating to the removal of provisional registration:

- Writing a plan for the Home Education Unit is a daunting task for many home educating parents, and is not something that can be rushed, or written in a day or two.
- There are situations where students in mainstream schooling need immediate registration with the Home Education Unit. For example, students who are not coping or are at risk of being suicidal due to extreme pressures they are facing in mainstream schooling.

Please consider retaining the Provisional application in some capacity for at-risk students.

4. Heavier Regulation will lead to non-compliance / not registering

For every registered home educated student, it is estimated there are one to two students who are unregistered. At present, there are few benefits to registering with the Home Education Unit. They do not help us to home educate, they do not provide us with resources or curriculums, they give us no funding, they don't provide us with an ".edu.au" email address to enable purchase of discounted student software. By further restricting how we home educate our children, I believe many more families will choose to not register at all.

5. Lack of consultation

Di Famer does not have the support of Queensland home educators. Not a single Queensland home educator was consulted for these proposed legislation changes. We want to be heard and just want the best education for our children.

My sons attend a literary class for home educating students that cover a diverse range of topics, from the Korean War to the Russian Revolution, Chinese philosophy, ethics and many more interesting and unique topics that aren't part of the Australian Curriculum. One thing they learned last year was: "Do not speak for a group of people unless you belong to that group or you have spoken to members of that group."

I, along with many other home educators, am available to speak with any Committee Members or MPs that are willing to listen.

Thank you again for reading my submission.