

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 327
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Education is an evolving field. Amidst these dynamic times of transformation, we must reflect on our CORE PURPOSES. As an education futurist and a pivotal contributor to the shift towards innovative methods of teaching our youth for a sustainable future, I pen this proposal. My insights are derived from two decades of diverse experience in STEM education, ranging from teaching senior chemistry in mainstream schools to serving as a primary school STEM specialist, facilitating teacher training in inquiry pedagogies, mentoring experienced educators, and currently, assisting homeschooling families through my enterprise. Let's recognise that we face a global crisis in education, which intersects with issues of youth crime, public health, mental wellbeing, living costs, consumerism and environmental degradation. To be concise, I will outline the principal factors I am engaging with through the adaptable and liberated homeschooling sector. My goal is to gather evidence and leverage these insights to collaborate with middle school teams on pedagogical strategies and inclusive assessment frameworks within traditional educational systems in future. A 'no device policy' was implemented after observing the decline in educational quality following the introduction of screens in mainstream middle school education. Children need environments free from screens to foster the development of their neurological pathways from an evolutionary perspective. Screen usage negatively impacts vision, posture, fine motor skills, bone and muscle development, core strength, and social and emotional abilities amongst many other aspects of childhood development, see Professor Selena Bartlett's work in this field. With Australia being the world leaders of parental psychological absence and affluent neglect, educational spaces should be a safe place where we engage with the physical world around us in a rare space devoid of technological distraction. My homeschool groups delve into the technological creation aspect, from building hardware and coding software to examining the effects of screens and learning how to master the algorithms that otherwise have the potential to control us, instead of merely being consumers. The Australian National Curriculum does not currently incorporate these essential modern-day skills and/or tech awareness, effectively excluding families who wish to preserve evolutionary cognitive functions and mental health within screen-free environments. Inquiry spaces facilitate engagement in learning by fostering curiosity. They enable young people to discover more about themselves, their passions, talents, and the world while exploring the content of the Australian National Curriculum in their unique way and at their own pace. Regardless of a child's age or abilities, a thoughtfully designed inquiry space connects the learning to the student. This connection can elevate the learning experience to levels far surpassing the curriculum's expectations for their age. In mainstream we speak of the importance of 'student voice and student choice' and our mainstream students are intelligent enough to see that choosing their own colour paper is not true choice in education. My students possess an empowered mindset, aware that their voices significantly shape their learning journey as they guide themselves with expert assistance, towards their future contributions to their wider communities and planet. Streamed Learning Styles allow for true inclusion. I have organized my class groups according to different learning styles, tailoring my teaching methods to suit each class. For my extroverted students, I provide multiple learning experience options that cater to both their individual needs and group dynamics. My introverted learners enjoy a quieter space where they can engage with scientific projects for extended periods if necessary. My adaptability to meet the needs of each student in these settings ensures that those large numbers of youth diagnosed with anxiety have a space of inclusion. Additionally, it allows students with high energy levels to express themselves freely in a stimulating and inquiry-driven environment. Each group can successfully cover the same Australian National Curriculum aligned content, but they

flexibly access this content through different modes. Multi-aged class groups offer a unique dynamic in the homeschooling environment. Each child brings distinct experiences from their home education. Some may be engaged in university-level preparatory courses online, while others joyfully concentrate on life skills and play. I have found that an inquiry space populated with students of varying ages and abilities promotes peer support and collaboration. Rather than adhering strictly to the single perspective of the Australian National Curriculum, students naturally challenge and support one another, raising the level of curriculum content to remarkable heights. With my expertise, I guide discussions and ideas, ensuring they either remain focused or I permit students to follow their chosen paths of inquiry. I set differentiated home exploration options and students are always happy to return, share and hear of another student's discoveries each week.

Curriculum Mapping and 'Pay it Forward' assessment can be achieved with the advent of A.I. We can chart each individual's curriculum journey without the compulsion to teach anything forcibly. We can also utilise "pay it forward" as a form of assessment. This approach varies for each student, and through partnerships with councils and local businesses, students have the chance to make a tangible impact in their community. The future health of our planet does not hinge on how well young people replicate information to receive an A-E score. We have an ideal opportunity to transform this model, especially for the disengaged middle school demographic. This is poised to become a part of the future of education and is currently available as an option for my homeschooling families to aid their registration and reporting as long as the choice remains for them. At this point in time, I am fully utilising the freedoms that homeschooling families have with their curriculum choices as I become a vastly experienced leader and valuable contributor to the education futurist space. I have been in multiple leadership positions in both primary and high school in the past, and I firmly believe that it is the restrictive nature of the structures that exist around HOW we work with the Australian National Curriculum that make schools a painful place for many students, teachers and school leaders today. Although I share concerns for all sectors of education, I respect each homeschooling family for their dedication to caring for their children, as conscious, connected and creative childhoods will lead to collective change. I firmly believe that there are numerous alternative options to consider before enacting this change in the Australian National Curriculum policy for homeschoolers. The removal of educator autonomy through standardisation has previously led to a significant decline in student engagement and an increase in behavioral incidents in classrooms, let us not make the same mistakes with this caring and devoted group of families and qualified teachers who are self-funding their unique journeys in the name of quality education.