

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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RE: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding several of the proposed amendments to the education bill that has recently been presented to parliament. As a home educator with over nine years of experience, I believe that I have good reason to understand the implications of these proposed changes for my family, and the negative effect that they will have on the wider home-schooling community.

I am well educated, with a double degree from the University of Queensland, and professional experience working for the government as well as not-for-profit organisations. My husband is also well educated with multiple higher education degrees, and 15 years of experience as a high school teacher. As a family, we hold education in high regard, and seek to foster a life-long love for learning in our children. For ten years, I have researched, planned for, and provided my three children with interesting and high-quality materials and experiences to facilitate their learning. I have enjoyed this process as well as being with my children as they learn from what I have provided. In my opinion, this environment has been in the best interests of my children.

I agree with Section 7, Chapter 9 part 5 (i) and (ii) that home education should be provided in a way that 'is in the best interests of the child' and 'ensures the child receives a high-quality education'. This is what I have spent ten years providing for my children. **However, I am concerned that the following proposed changes to the Bill will undermine my ability to provide this for my children.**

The Bill proposes that I provide an educational program that is 'consistent with an approved education and training program' (Clause 68, Section 217 (1)(b)(ii) and that this means 'the national school curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum)' (Clause 68, Section 217 (3)(a)). **The change to adherence with the Australian Curriculum is of grave concern to me, as it will decrease the quality of education I can provide for my children.**

- As a home educator with 3 children of different ages, I take advantage of doing some of their work together to make it of greater impact, such as history and science. For example, when we have studied Medieval history together, we attended the Abbey Medieval Festival, made and dressed up in medieval clothing, cooked and ate a medieval feast as a family, created a medieval castle from construction items (complete with moving parts), and built a Viking long house and weapons. I target their different age levels by providing them with different reading materials and expecting different assignments from them. **If I was required to follow the Australian Curriculum, this immersive learning experience would not be possible, because my children would each be studying a different period in history according to their age.** This would decrease the quality of the education I can provide for them, and therefore also not be in their best interests.
- When it comes to choosing curriculum for my children, I look at what their needs are, and then choose a program or a method that is going to help them to learn. Sometimes, this means that I have chosen something that is not consistent with the Australian Curriculum, **but this does not mean that it has not provided them with a high-quality education.** For example, I have chosen to give my children a writing program that meets their needs, but that introduces different genres at different age levels to the Australian Curriculum. In the end, my children will be excellent writers, because I have made sure

to find something that will teach them well. **If I am required to adhere to the Australian Curriculum, I will no longer be meeting their needs.** Can that still be called a 'in the best interests of the child'?

The Bill also proposes a change to the reporting requirements for registration. I do not agree with the necessity for these changes.

- Thus far, I have been able to successfully report to the HEU on most subjects that my children have studied by providing a third sample each year that is different to previous years. I would presume that based on the program I provide, and the high-quality of the six samples I submit, it would be clear that I am covering all bases for my children. I don't believe that requiring me to provide samples for 'each subject or learning area' (Clause 68, Section 217 (1)(ba)) will provide the HEU with any necessary additional proof. However, it will require me to take more time to write my report, which will in turn take me away from my primary responsibility of teaching my children.
- In addition to this, the requirement to report on Maths and English, as well as 'each subject', will remove the flexibility that is essential to provide a high-quality education for home educated children:
 - I can see how this change will be difficult for families with children who have disabilities which mean they cannot do a full suite of subjects. If a child cannot do English in line with the Australian Curriculum because of their disability (for example, my niece), how can the parents be expected to report on it each year in this way?
 - Not only this, but as my children approach upper high school, they may no longer need to do a full suite of subjects - for example, if my child has completed the whole maths curriculum by the end of Grade 11, I will be unable to report on maths as a subject area in Grade 12, yet I will be required to do so according to the proposed changes. And if they do an early entry course for university, which many home educated students do, there is no provision for this under the proposed amendments.
- The proposed amendment to Section 217(2)(c) that the report "be accompanied by evidence satisfactory to the chief executive that demonstrates the educational progress of the child" **is of deep concern to me.** Why is the demonstrated progress to be evidenced to the satisfaction of the chief executive? Is this a requirement for children in schools? Absolutely not! No child is rejected from a school, or even from progressing to the next year level, because they have not 'demonstrated progress' to someone's satisfaction. **I reject this change and ask that the wording be retained as it is** - that the report must be "accompanied by any other documents, identified in the approved form, the chief executive reasonably requires." This is reasonable. But no child should be required to 'demonstrate their progress' in this proposed way.

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.

Yours sincerely,