

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 338
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Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to the **Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024**.

My concerns relate to the proposed amendments to **Section 217**, that being the introduction of the requirement for a child's home education to be '...consistent with an approved education training program...'. Limiting a home educated child's educational program to the Australian Curriculum, a senior subject syllabus (developed by the QCAA), a Vocational and Education Training (VET) course (level 1 or above, under the AQF), or a combination thereof will adversely affect those gifted children being (or yet to be) home educated in Queensland.

Our son was formally identified as highly gifted in Year 5. Even with a formal identification, we were unsuccessful in our attempts to have his 'elite' independent school provide him with an appropriate academic program.

Endeavouring to find a group of like-minded peers, he joined Mensa. In order to address his increasing academic disengagement and underachievement, we began supplementing his mainstream education with courses through the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University. The quality of CTY's educational offerings so clearly surpassed that which he had experienced in his 'elite' Victorian independent school. Unlike his mainstream school teachers, his CTY teachers were all experienced and trained in gifted education. Equally as important, he finally had the opportunity to work within groups of formally identified gifted peers. He positively thrived!

Unfortunately, his 'elite' independent school was unwilling to provide any time allowance for the opportunities that CTY had to offer him, ultimately threatening his enrolment should he miss ANY of their own curriculum offerings. This, despite the fact that many other students missed classes to pursue their own out-of-school sporting endeavours!

We considered the options available to us. Our decision to home educate our son from the start of Year 7 was not only the obvious choice, it was clearly the only one.

We are indeed lucky to reside in Victoria, where the only curriculum requirement for registered home educators is to address the eight Key Learning Areas (KLA). How this is achieved is entirely up to each home educator. In this, the Victorian Government provides parents of gifted

children the absolute autonomy to access the highest quality education on offer ... anywhere in the world. We, and he, took full advantage of it.

Our son graduated last year with a United States (US) High School Diploma, an SAT which placed him at the 99th percentile of the 5.5 million test takers worldwide, and seven AP Exams. His AP Exam results saw him (twice) awarded the College Board's AP Scholar with Distinction, as well as their AP International Diploma for displaying "...exceptional achievement across a variety of disciplines ... [and] ... outstanding academic excellence with a global perspective...".

Australian citizenship, combined with his US studies, enabled our son to apply for a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) as a Domestic Student with International Qualifications at ALL of his preferred Australian universities. In addition to his numerous course offers, UNSW offered him their prestigious Scientia Scholarship and ANU offered him their National University Scholarship. Both these Academic Merit scholarships are offered only to those students achieving a raw ATAR of 99.90 and above. Our son's passion for politics and the law, has seen him accept ANU's offer, with him now four weeks into his Bachelor of Laws (Honours) / Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

I have no doubt that all this would have been impossible, had the Victorian Government limited us to following the National Curriculum and thus being unable to access the best available educational resources and pathways worldwide.

Along with our own story, I would ask that you please consider the following:

- 1) ACARA's process of assessment has resulted in their recognising that alternative curriculum frameworks such as Steiner, Montessori, International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program and International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program can indeed "... deliver comparable educational outcomes for students as for those who are taught the Australian Curriculum...". That the Queensland government would decide that home educating families are universally incapable of achieving comparable educational outcomes beggars belief. Not only does it ignore the academic pedigrees many home educators have, it also calls into question the assessment capacity of Queensland's own Home Education Unit (HEU).

- 2) That Australian citizens and residents, with a variety of overseas high school qualifications, are able to apply for CSP's at Australian universities, clearly demonstrates the equivalency of such curriculum frameworks with the Australian Curriculum. That the Queensland Government is calling into question the ability of Australia's tertiary institutions, to assess the suitability of potential undergraduate candidates, and the curricula that they have followed, also beggars belief.
- 3) Whether the Australian Curriculum meets the needs of gifted students has long been questioned, with gifted students consistently making the least gains in Australian schools. UNSW's Professor Jae Yup Jung's research has drawn attention to the plight of underachieving gifted students Australia-wide, including the many who have dropped out of school entirely. With gifted students consistently shown to make the least academic gains in school, home educating is often the only educational choice for gifted children. Unsurprisingly, Mensa research has revealed the over-representation in Australia of gifted students in home education, with the lack of flexibility of schools in providing opportunities for gifted students and the lack of teachers with gifted training being identified as these students' biggest challenges in school.

Australia's mainstream system failed our son, as it has with so many other gifted children. Home education provided him with the opportunity to soar, and us the opportunity to stop advocating and start educating.

I implore you, and your government, not to put in place legislation which will so clearly thwart the efforts of those home educating parents in your State who are committed to meeting the academic needs of their gifted children.

Sincerely,

Karen Glauser-Edwards

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