

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 357
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Publication:
Attachments: No attachment
Submitter Comments:

Taneisha Hicks

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Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Homeschooling Legislation

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in homeschooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. As the adult sister of a neurodivergent homeschooled child, I firmly believe that these changes would undermine the very reasons why many parents, including mine, have chosen homeschooling as the preferred mode of education for their child/ren.

These changes to the current legislation dangerously infringe upon parental rights to educate a child as parents see fit, and in many cases, as the child needs.

In many circumstances the proposed legislation also borders on discriminatory, with regards to children with disabilities and meeting their specific educational requirements, which have not been met in state schools teaching the Australian Curriculum.

I believe the essence of homeschooling lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. By imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes would impede the autonomy of children, such as my brother's, and hinder his ability to pursue education in a way that best suits his needs.

My brother has attended 6 schools since meeting "school age", 7 years ago. He has ASD, GAD (Generalised Anxiety Disorder) and ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder).

This combination has meant that there is no school environment that he is able to attend which offers him the support he requires and is able to provide him with the same quality education that my parents can, at home.

One of the primary motivations for homeschooling is to provide my brother with a personalized learning experience that fosters his intellectual curiosity and allows him to learn at his own pace, in a safe and sensory friendly environment. These new proposed regulations threaten to restrict this flexibility and stifle his natural inclination to explore and discover the world around him.

Furthermore, enforcing a standardized curriculum fails to recognize the diverse interests and talents of homeschooling students. It overlooks the fact that every child is unique and may thrive in different subject areas or learning environments. By imposing rigid educational requirements, we risk depriving children of the opportunity to pursue their passions and develop their full potential. Teaching my brother at home in a way that he can ACTUALLY learn and how he wants to learn, IS how my parents provide him with a high-quality education, something that the Australian Curriculum and Education system, has failed thus far to do.

Making parents follow the Australian Curriculum does not mean that they will be giving their child a high-quality education, it simply means we are forcing them to learn within mandated guidelines that don't care about their individuality, safety, well-being or future dreams.

In essence, these proposed changes would not only undermine the fundamental principles of homeschooling but also limit my brother's ability to learn and grow in a way that honours his individuality and creativity. As an adult sibling of a homeschooled child (and parent of young children) I am deeply invested in supporting my brother's education. I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and instead, focus on supporting families in providing a rich and diverse educational experience tailored to the needs of each child.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

Taneisha Hicks