

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 364  
**Submitted by:** Gemma Hoffman  
**Publication:**  
**Attachments:** No attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Concerns regarding proposed changes to Homeschooling Legislation  
**Date:** Sunday, 17 March 2024 9:15:15 AM

---

Dear Committee Members,

As a homeschooling parent of three children, and a teacher who was employed for many years by the Department of Education and Training I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed amendments outlined in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

Please allow me to share with you our personal journey with home education. I am hopeful that you will see why these amendments will be harmful for my children, and many others in the community.

My twin daughters attended mainstream school in Sydney until Grade 2 before we began homeschooling in response to our concerns regarding their mental and emotional wellbeing. We have now been homeschooling for 8 years.

During their three years at school, following the Australian Curriculum, my daughters were academically 'brilliant' according to every one of their classroom teachers. However, the decline in their mental health was alarming. One of my daughters was pulling out her own hair due to the anxiety and developed such debilitating obsessive compulsive rituals that we needed to arrive at school 15 minutes early each day for her to complete them. When asked by the psychologist we employed at the time, my daughter told her she "needs to do it to be safe at school". Her twin sister became increasingly unwell with physical symptoms including, but not limited to, daily headaches, nausea, vomiting and insomnia. We believed at the time that she was suffering from an illness and sought multiple medical perspectives, had numerous tests before she too, was diagnosed with significant Generalised Anxiety Disorder.

At this point in time, we were meeting weekly with a Psychologist through the Hospital who had concerns for both girls' wellbeing. One of my daughters at this time (during grade 2) was expressing a desire to no longer live.

Our decision to begin homeschooling required I give up my teaching career which I loved and necessitated a move to Queensland as we could no longer afford our mortgage on a single income. We did not make this decision lightly and these are the sacrifices we made willingly to ensure our children's wellbeing.

Removing the pressure associated directly with the implementation of the Australian Curriculum; the testing, the ticking of boxes, the rigidity, the constant rushing children through learning to meet mandated standards allowed both of my daughters to enjoy learning once more. Their mental and emotional health stabilised immediately and has continued to improve ever since, although there is still the residue of the negative impact the pressure of school had on them and both acknowledge those years as "traumatic".

When we had our son in 2015 we were open to the idea of sending him to mainstream school and explored these options. At around age 4 he began experiencing debilitating migraine headaches. We sought to uncover what was causing these almost weekly migraines and involved multiple professionals in his care and discovering that he has a degenerative condition affecting his vision. He requires bifocal lenses to manage this, however, when we have tried them, he experiences migraines within 15 minutes of use. Within a school environment, he would be unable to effectively read the board and then read his paper and likely would require full time classroom support to manage this,

support that the Government would need to fund.

As a homeschooling family we can dive deep into learning in ways that schools are not equipped for due to the Curriculum. Our homeschool program is individualised, differentiated, responsive, flexible, holistic, supportive, and tailored for the unique needs, skills, strengths, learning styles and interests of each child.

Each year I sit down with the Australian Curriculum as I plan for the year of learning ahead. By customising the existing curriculum to meet their unique needs and interests we observe our children thriving within their education, rather than simply having to endure it.

We follow an interest led, project-based approach to learning and I run a Project Based learning group for a number of homeschooling children in the community to ensure that my children have an abundance of occasions to collaborate, communicate and build skills and knowledge across all Key Learning Areas.

As an example, my 8 year old expressed a desire to learn about Cheetahs, so we began there-learning everything we could about Cheetahs, then we moved on to learn about the country where Cheetahs live, which led to researching the River Nile and beyond that, the mythical creature said to inhabit the Nile. He collated his research, planned and designed multiple physical projects to represent his learning and then presented this to his peers and their families. Within this 6 week undertaking he built skills and knowledge across multiple key learning areas.

Adhering to the Australian Curriculum would render this interest led, project-based style of learning impossible for our family which would reduce engagement and ultimately negatively impact their love of learning. We would not be able to research Cheetahs or Africa because they are not in the Curriculum for his year level. However, it is clear to me as a parent and teacher that this individualised approach fosters academic excellence and equips our children with the competencies and skills necessary to thrive in and ever-changing world.

Personalised programs facilitate exceptionally high-quality education and foster levels of engagement that transcend the limitations of institutional curriculums. Through individualized programs our children are afforded the opportunity to explore subjects deeply, pursue passions and interests eagerly, and develop key critical thinking and problem-solving skills that will serve them for life. They have agency and input into their learning, they are invited to collaborate in planning and implementation of the program, which enhances cooperation, motivation and enthusiastic engagement in their education.

Under Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights it states that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" and "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms..." The proposed changes are in breach of these accepted international human rights.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to recognise the value of homeschooling as a viable alternative to traditional curriculum centred education. By empowering and supporting parents to best meet the individual needs of their children and embracing diverse educational approaches we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education in which they can thrive academically, emotionally and mentally.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Gemma Hoffman

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]