

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Committee Secretary
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill that has been presented to parliament. As a home educating parent, I do not support some of these changes that have been introduced and I am worried about the impact that they will have on my family and the homeschooling community.

The drafted amendments are making it compulsory for all home educated students to adhere to the Australian Curriculum. This would remove the flexibility to our learning that has brought great success for my children over our last few years of homeschooling. It would limit what and when we could study and dictate at what level my children should be learning each year. My children would be penalised for not meeting their levels in some subjects and would be limited on advancing in subjects in which they take great interest. Average doesn't work for these children, that's why many have removed children from mainstream schooling to implement their own plans to cater to their children's level, skill set and interest. Like many in the homeschooling community my children are neurodivergent. There are some profoundly brilliant children amongst our community who would be extremely limited by the proposed changes. These children would once again fall behind in learning and be failed by our education system because they are unable to educate in the manor that is best for them.

As a mother I witness everyday my children's skill sets. For example my Daughter who is 5 and would be in prep this year takes a strong interest in mathematics and has requested to learn fractions and multiplications. With the proposed changes she would wait an extra 2 – 3 years to even begin exploring this. My son who is 7 and would be in year 2 would be penalised for not being at the level for English that is required under the Australian Curriculum that we would be made to follow if this bill passes. We chose this path of education because we see our own children's potential, my 7yr old has taught me more than I can imagine about subjects of his own choosing (electronics, gaming, mathematics etc). But this would not be the case if we had to limit his learning due to having to adhere to a set curriculum. These children thrive in a self learning environment and it has been often noted that home educated children tend to graduate or reach higher education compared to their fellow schooled classmates. I strongly believe this is because home educated children are given the opportunity to explore and advance on their specialties and interests.

Moreover, the Australian Curriculum is designed for classroom teaching, not for small groups or families of multiple ages. Trying to teach three children three different topics in science, history, geography and art is simply impractical. Many homeschoolers learn in small learning pods with multiple ages to make use of community expertise, shared excursions and collaborative projects. I, myself being a mother of three watch my children learning from each other. I watch our social groups where we have children of all ages from babies to teens educating each other. The older peers teaching the younger children, a wealth of knowledge and learning from our whole community. This is an opportunity that is not often experienced in a mainstream environment in which children in a classroom are rarely surrounded with kids of varying ages as well as adults of different life experiences, backgrounds and skill levels.

These amendments go further to state that home educators increase their reporting load from three subjects to all subjects. The report that we are currently required to produce annually to the Home Education Unit far exceeds anything that I myself have ever received from school or in recent years have seen my friend's children receive from school. My child's report last year was over 3000 words, 3 pages of annotations along with accompanying samples of my sons learning over the previous 12 months. Reporting on 5+ subjects would be overwhelming unless the volume of information required was substantially less.

I myself have watched the mainstream system and the curriculum fail those around me. I have first hand seen the neurodivergent children get lost and forgotten among the mainstream system and being made to follow a curriculum that is not made for children whose minds work different. I have seen fellow adults having to reeducate themselves after leaving school because the curriculum was not adapted to suit their learning style. Many adults I have seen feel forgotten and unseen because a curriculum was pushed upon them that did not allow them to expand their horizons and explore their interests. The homeschooling community is one that is designed to allow these children to succeed and the proposed amendments will simply create another generation of children who have been lost in a curriculum that isn't designed for them.

I am concerned that the legislation has been introduced without proper consultation with current homeschooling families. I do hope that you will take my feedback into consideration. I am asking for you to help us to push for changes to the amendments in parliament. For education to be inclusive of all students, I believe it is important to understand the reasoning behind the education decisions of each and every family and individual child who struggle the most to fit into mainstream education. To trust that we as parents simply want what is best for our children and to watch our children succeed in a world that is designed for them, not a world that will force them to fit into a box that they never will.

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 the important issue and I'm more than happy to meet with you or provide you with further information.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Pankhurst.

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