

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 436
Submitted by: Renae Larkin
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Submission
EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Author's name	Renae Larkin
Organisation	N/A Individual submission
Email address	[REDACTED]
Mailing address	[REDACTED]
Mobile	[REDACTED]

Overview of concerns about the changes proposed to home education:

1. Reporting timeframes stipulated; and
2. Mandating use of ACARA; and
3. Changes to reporting requirements.

1. Changes to reporting timeframe requirements.

Time periods proposed reasonable for applicants and decision-maker are not reasonable. 30 days to supply a plan would be sufficient if HEU provided education on how to write a plan. Currently, volunteers are spending considerable time sharing this information with the community. These volunteers are as busy as HEU with the influx of new home schoolers. School children take six weeks off over Christmas every year and that is considered acceptable, as such it makes no sense to have any fear of a lack of quality education occurring during this period. I propose a 45-day provisional registration period at the end of which a plan is due. The HEU should be provided with adequate staff to ensure a fast turnaround on assessing these plans if the Department of Education is concerned about children not receiving a high-quality education during plan processing time. At present the HEU is taking more than 30 working days to respond to applications, plans and reports submitted by homeschooling parents. At a minimum, we should receive the same amount of time to submit as the HEU have to send a response.

2. Redefining definition of 'a high-quality education' in the context of home education to now mean ACARA curriculum.

The definition of high quality proposed in this consultation paper relies on the Australian Curriculum or a recognised alternative, showing emotional, social, physical and intellectual development, as well as a literacy and numeracy progression. The majority of states in Australia do not define high-quality

education. Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT currently expect learning across multiple subjects. Only Western Australia and the Northern Territory require the use of ACARA, with NSW using its own curriculum. There is no evidence to suggest that homeschooled children in any one state are receiving a superior education, so there is no need for this definition or alignment with ACARA. Parents don't need ACARA placed within the definitions of 'high-quality education' as all homeschooling families are aware it is available to use should they want it as a part of providing high-quality education. The use of ACARA in no way defines a high-quality education and nor was it ever intended to. Limiting my children to an ACARA based education would reduce the quality of education they receive substantially. My children are working across grade level, above grade level and by combining subjects well outside the scope of ACARA, giving them a broad and deep education that considers their physical, emotional and mental well-being.

3. Changes to reporting requirements.

I support reports on educational progress, rather than a focus on the learning plan because the former is child-centric whilst the latter is simply box-ticking of parental compliance with a plan. Additionally, as new home schooling parents quickly discover, plans very often change. Being required to report on how well we stuck to our plans would cause stress to families and prevent parents from being able to make the kinds of pedagogy decisions teachers make daily- like adjusting a plan that isn't working. Reporting should focus on learning progress, and this looks different for every child. If I can demonstrate that my child has learned well, I should not need to prove that we followed our original learning plan. Changing plans in response to my child's learning needs demonstrates successful teaching and learning. Rather than a sample approach where only some reports are read, I would prefer to see HEU adopt family reports (as opposed to us reporting on each individual child). This would be a better way to prioritise resources. I support all families keeping on-going evidence/records of their children's learning. Then, those families who are to be audited could be supported by a paid, independent intermediary (with home-schooling experience). This would help families to understand the reporting process, while also assisting HEU staff to assess high-quality learning in the home education context

I urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritize the best interests of our rapidly growing and proactive home educating community. Rather than forcing a failing system onto parents who chose to homeschool, time would be

better spent addressing the failings of the education system that drove parents to make this decision. I implore you to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policymaking that values input from all stakeholders and ensures the integrity and quality of our education system.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns.