

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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To the Committee,

I am writing to highlight the invaluable experience of home educating families in providing individualized curriculums that consistently lead to exceptionally high-quality education outcomes for our children. It is our collective experience and certainly my personal experience, that personalized, tailored programs not only promote deep engagement, but also foster levels of achievement that far surpass those achievable within the confines of a standardized curriculum designed for institutional settings. Home-schooling allows us, as parents, to craft educational experiences that are uniquely suited to the interests, strengths, and learning styles of each of our children.

By tailoring the curriculum to meet their individual needs, we can provide them with a level of engagement and motivation that is often unimaginable within the constraints of a one-size-fits-all approach. My eldest child began home-schooling in 2009 at the beginning of his grade one year. Sadly, during his prep year he'd had a very poor experience at our local primary school. Day after day he came home in tears having been poorly treated by one of his peers. He learnt very little in that year, which surprised me as he had flourished during his time at kindy and was very much ready to read when he graduated. My husband and I are farmers in a rural community and we could not see how we could afford to send all of our children to a private school on our income. We felt that public school was no longer a good option, so began our home-schooling journey. Over the years our son developed a love of learning that will stand him in good stead all his life. He quickly grasped mathematical concepts, studied science and history, learned to read and enjoy writing many different text types, discovered and honed his gift for music and was free to develop his skills working with wood which lead to him taking up a joinery apprenticeship at the age of 17. His employer actively sought for him to apply because he was home-schooled! Our son recently competed and won bronze at a national level in his trade and has since completed his apprenticeship and become a qualified joiner. His musical gift has lead him to play in bands, build a home recording studio, and even produce soundtracks for short films, some of which have won awards. He is faithful, hardworking, passionate, honest and wise beyond his years and I attribute this to the fact that I was able to tailor his education to meet his individual needs.

Our experience has shown that individualized programs enable our children to pursue their passions, delve deeply into subjects that captivate their curiosity, and develop critical thinking skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. The individualised program I developed for our younger son is enabling him to pursue his passion for bees. While still furthering his abilities in academic subjects, he has had the support to learn from experts, build hive boxes, catch his own swarms, relocate undesired beehives from local homes and build his own small apiary. Further to this he is now undertaking a Cert 3 in beekeeping and will be apprenticed by a local beekeeper while still completing his school in a flexible manner at home. Beekeeping is not a regular 9-5 job and to do what our son is doing would be impossible as a student at a public school. It also does not fit with the Australian Curriculum though it is a legitimate career path. Our son has driven his own learning in this area. Bees and beekeeping books from the local library have been read and re-read. He has watched countless beekeeping videos online and spent time alongside local beekeepers and gleaned mountains of knowledge and wisdom from them. Having the opportunity to drive the direction of his learning has allowed our young man to follow his passion and build a career from it!

Empowering our children to take ownership of their learning and follow their own paths of inquiry, prepares them to thrive in an ever-changing world that demands adaptability and creativity. It prepares them for real life! Our son hasn't merely been memorizing facts and figures; he is actively engaged in the meaningful process of discovery, exploration, and problem-solving and has been from a young age.

Individualized education fosters a love of learning that extends beyond the classroom and into all aspects of our children's lives. I could also tell you about my eldest daughter who because she was home educated, was able to pursue her artistic gifting and her love for farming. She now runs her own art business while simultaneously studying for her Diploma of Agriculture and enjoying working on our family farm. Or I could tell you about our 17 year old daughter, who is a gifted musician and completing senior studies at a DE school so she can go on to teach music. Or I could tell you about our youngest who is a fully self-motivated learner, currently covering all key learning areas at or above grade level. Apart from having time to develop her love for music and art, she is learning to speak and read Afrikaans because her best friends are from South Africa. It is clear that all of my children are thriving because they have been educated at home with their individualised learning programs.

If we as home-schoolers were to be forced to use the National Curriculum my children would be placed at a significant disadvantage. Especially considering the AC is written to be understood and used by qualified teachers, not home-schoolers. I have made use of several different curriculums over the years across all KLAs and in this way I have been able to support my children as the unique individuals that they are. While some of my children's learning has aligned with the National Curriculum, tailoring their entire educational program to align would be a step in the wrong direction. That would be like tailoring the child to fit a curriculum, rather than fitting the program to that individual child and that goes against everything I have come to value in a quality educational program. I urge the committee to recognize the profound impact of individualized education in home-schooling and to respect the autonomy of home schooling families to continue providing personalized curriculums that best serve the needs of our children. Protecting and upholding the diversity of approaches within home-schooling, will ensure that every child receives a high-quality education that prepares them for success.

Sincerely,

Home-schooling Parent and Advocate