

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

**Submission No:** 445  
**Submitted by:** Sara Hocking  
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**Submitter Comments:**

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Dear Education, Employment, Training, & Skills Committee,

As the parent of a child with a disability; a former inclusion teacher in the state school system; a former homeschooler; and professional holding Master's degrees in School Leadership/Administration, as well as Special Education, the proposed legislation is deeply concerning – particularly in regard to changes to the Home Education Unit.

Across the world, there is a rise in homeschool registrations. This shift is not limited to Queensland nor is it limited to Australia. The droves of parents removing their children from school reflect a concerned populus taking action to prevent the indoctrination of their children, the discrimination against their children and their overall concern about the Australian Curriculum.

Rather than making changes to the school system, the proposed legislation seeks to make changes to the Home Education registration, with the reasoning being a single situation that has occurred **once** involving a cult and children being abused. If child abuse is the concern, the concern should be taken up with Child Safety, not with homeschooling families. Most homeschooling families are not members of cults, and are not abusing their children. It's irresponsible to take action against 10,000+ children who have left a broken system because of an outlier.

If the Committee were to disaggregate the data and look at homeschool registrations, they would see that a large proportion of the children have additional needs. Many times these disabilities are undiagnosed due to lack of access, and lack of affordability. Until the recent change within the schooling system to using the NCCD (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data) funding model, children with **any** disability that feel outside the realm of a physical, hearing, vision, intellectual, or autism were not able to access additional funding and told by schools that they were limited because "they were not receiving funding to support the children." Specific learning disabilities, ADHD and a myriad of other disability areas were not considered and not funded, leaving children to fend for themselves.

Parents who were able took action, and removed their children from the school system. Often the choice to enrol in the Home Education Unit was **not** actually a choice. It was imperative to stop the cycle of depression, anxiety, bullying and lack of support from professionals in the school setting. If we all consider what we would do if our children were coming home crying on a daily basis, were getting failing marks and were not getting any additional help because their children "didn't meet the funding criteria," we would likely take the same action.

To ask these same parents to stringently follow a curriculum that did not benefit their child; that did not improve their child's learning outcomes and did not allow for their child's individual differences is inappropriate and inexcusable. The Queensland government talks about supporting inclusion, and has signed on to a 2030 Agenda that specifically outlines Quality Education as a component of the goal with subsections around human rights and

inclusivity. This legislation is in direct contradiction with most of the tenets of that goal, and seeks to subvert the individual rights of parents, and the needs of their children.

Perhaps, rather than attempting to staunch the bleed of the rising number of homeschoolers, at a surface level, it would be more appropriate and useful to address the issues within the education system. Punishing a minority for their individual preferences and differences has, historically, never turned out well for the government.

Instead of attempting to cut down on the number of homeschoolers by making registration harder, by forcing them to follow the Australian Curriculum, the Committee and Minister of Education would consider the following:

- Remove the subsections regarding Home Education changes from the legislation. The Home Education Unit, currently, has backlogs and a hard time keeping up with the submissions and information from parents. Increasing their workload, unless there is a substantial increase in funding for that department is antithetical.
- Focus on ensuring teachers within the school system are highly qualified for their positions – teachers in the special education/inclusion settings typically have no additional skills, training or qualifications beyond primary or secondary education. They aren't trained in recognising disability to ensure early intervention (which is proven to yield the best outcomes) and are unaware of best practices in education regarding special education services.
- Expand the "support plan" provision to include all students who are considered at "Supplemental" level or higher in the NCCD yearly counts. And that these support plans are updated, in writing, at least once per semester.
- Consider incentives like loan-forgiveness for teachers who acquire tertiary credentials in special education, inclusion or disability.
- Decrease the "wokeism" and identity politics embedded in the curriculum
- Increase Departmental training options through the Department's online training portals to help teachers understand "reasonable adjustments" and how to collaborate with other professionals to make them.
- Require all middle leadership positions, and above, within the Department to participate in training around the Disability Standards for Education Act, as well as the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data.
- Allow homeschooling families the right to choose the most appropriate pedagogy approaches and content for their children, and the wide variety of individual needs, particularly those of children with disabilities.
- Utilise the legislation from Tasmania and Western Australia as an appropriate framework for Home Education

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any additional discussion with the Committee or Committee members.

Kind Regards,

Sara Hocking