

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

**Submission No:** 475  
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**Submitter Comments:**

Dear Committee Members,

I am a home educating parent of two primary school aged children and my third child is 3½ and has just started basic phonics and number awareness this year. This is my sixth year of educating my children. Prior to this I have spent several years teaching high school Mathematics and Science in both public and private schools and several years in tutoring. I have completed a bachelor's degree in Science with a double major in Mathematics, a Bachelor of Education, as well as a Master's Degree and a Graduate Diploma in other disciplines.

We started home educating our children because of health issues, however, even if these health issues were resolved, now that we have seen the merits of home education, we would continue on this path.

I am writing this letter to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. As a Home Educator I do not support these changes as they will negatively impact the quality of education I am currently delivering to my children.

My primary concern is the requirement that all home educators align, be consistent with, the Australian Curriculum and the implication that this is the only means in which a high-quality education can be obtained. The policy objectives/underlying reasons state that they think by increasing regulation of home education (by requiring all Home Educators to adhere to the Australian Curriculum) and ensuring Queensland aligns with other states in requiring this adherence, that this will somehow lead to a higher quality education.

Another of their stated goals is that they want to acknowledge well-being, inclusion, equity and diversity of students. On the one hand they want the well-being of all students whilst allowing for diversity and yet then they are wanting to stipulate that all students follow the exact same curriculum to achieve a high-quality education, that there is a one size fits all solution, i.e. no diversity. I have been in education for a very long time, and this is not the case, one size does not fit all, especially if the goal is a high-quality education! It is one of the strengths of home education that we can tailor make our educational programs to best suit our individual children and our family culture. As a teacher I was constantly frustrated by not being able to teach each child according to their needs, (the bright kids got bored, while the strugglers got left behind. I had students in high school who still couldn't read and many who couldn't do basic maths). Many didn't need this tailoring, but many did! No teacher in a school could ever provide a tailor-made education program for each of their students as I do for my children.

As mentioned above a strength of home education is that we can tailor each child's education according to their needs. We can extend them where they are showing gifts, spend extra time in areas where they are struggling or show an interest in and provide them with a huge smorgasbord of subject areas. We can delve deeply into

topics and teach subjects systematically and thoroughly rather than skimpily covering a diverse range of subjects for the purposes of ticking that box.

There is not only one way to achieve a high-quality education. There are excellent resources available from all over the world that we have access to and make use of. We currently use many resources from America, some of these subject areas are not taught in our schools. The Maths program we are using from Singapore is amazing; my daughter who is not naturally a maths person, is able to understand and achieve, and is solving problems many of my year 8 and 9 students couldn't.

As home educators we already have the option to use the Australian curriculum if we think this will be the best fit for our children and it will lead to providing a high-quality education for them. Up until this year, I have been using a homeschool provider which has been following the Australian Curriculum. This was a good base line to begin with, but every year I have had to supplement this, and increasingly so as my children have gotten older. There have been some very good units, some of which I am hoping to use with my youngest child. However, as I was using the supplementary curriculum, it became increasingly obvious that these were a better fit for my children, and that there were better Language Arts and Science and History programs that would allow us to go into greater depth of knowledge in grammar, spelling, writing, science and history. These also better helped me to address areas of weakness. Over the summer when I looked at the amount of addons that I was going to be attempting to use this year, to ensure my kids would continue to progress academically, to achieve their full potential and receive a high-quality education, I realised that we had to change our base line. This year, we decided to stop using this Australian based curriculum as our base line and instead use alternative sources and supplementing this where appropriate with the Australian program we'd previously been using. It has been a less piecemeal approach to our days, and our lessons are more consistent and more thorough, and my kids have been stretched to a much higher level. My children every day, despite their increased workload and higher level I am stretching them to, have exclaimed how much more they appreciate the way we are now structuring our home education.

In home education we have the gift of being able to stretch our children and not have to worry about the group, thus we can go at a deeper level or a slower pace where necessary and cover many areas to a depth that just isn't possible in a classroom environment. My children are capable academically and therefore I want to extend them to their full potential rather than limit them and tick boxes to please other people.

If we who know our children best, think other resources are a better fit, then we should have the right to use these resources. As long as we reach the end goal of children who have been taught how to think and who will be responsible citizens what does it matter what we use to get there? Isn't this what an appreciation for diversity should allow for?

As home educating parents who are with our children day in day out for the entirety of their educating years, we have a vested interest, much higher than any teacher or

principal or government body, to ensure our children are highly educated and responsible citizens, because frankly, if they aren't, we have no one else to blame and we will be shouldering this responsibility for the rest of their lives.

The Bill seems to erroneously believe that there is no monitoring of home education, "*Noting these higher numbers, it is more important than ever that the students are undertaking a high-quality program and that the legislation safeguards for student wellbeing.*" Home education is already highly monitored and regulated. We already annually submit reports to HEU for each child including our proposed education programs for the next year and report on their educational progress over the past year. It is reviewed and checked by HEU to ensure that it is a high-quality education program and that we are meeting the needs of our children. So there seems to be no legitimate concern our children are not being well taught. If there are concerns apparently parents are informed and asked to address the issues highlighted. I personally have never been asked to modify anything.

At some point in the past few years, all home educators were asked to participate in a survey as HEU was struggling to keep up with the influx of Home Education applications during and post COVID. In these documents they acknowledged that Qld Home Educators were providing high quality education programs to their children. They were so confident of the high-quality education we were delivering they were proposing they only audit 10% of the annual reports submitted. In light of this acknowledgement from HEU that Qld Home Educators are already providing high quality education, it seems contradictory to be now informed we are not delivering high quality to our children and can only achieve this by everyone adhering to the same curriculum.

How is it a *new* guiding principle that home education should *suddenly* be about the best interest and "safeguards well-being" of our children? Surely this has always been the case. As a parent who has taken on this momentous task of educating my children, and all the sacrifices this entails, I have done so for the primary reason of seeking the best for my children, I have a deep commitment to ensuring my children receive a high-quality education and am seeking their overall well-being. I am not alone in my motivations!

Another concern I have is that these proposed changes are not taking into account that for some subject areas, nearly everything except Maths and Language Arts, we teach our children together. This is a huge advantage as they can learn off each other despite being different ages and at different levels. It is also more realistic of what occurs when they enter the work force, or anywhere apart from school. Many home educated children are not on the same level for all of their subjects. My son is ahead in maths, science, history and probably slightly lagging in Language Arts. When they get stuck on a topic, especially for Maths and English, we stop and spend extensive time on this until they comprehend it. For my son, he is whizzing through his Maths and we've nearly finished the text books for the current year. It will be

extremely tedious, limiting and meaningless to try and map what we do with the Australian Curriculum.

It's also of concern that children will be required to be doing Maths in year 11 and 12. I taught and tutored high school mathematics for several years. For the majority of students, as long as they grasp all of the maths that is covered up to and including year 10, this will be all they need. If they are mathematically inclined or doing subjects where extension maths is required, they will naturally choose to study maths further in their senior years. I had many students in the senior years extremely bored in the General Maths class, Maths A, because they knew the maths we were covering; it was redundant and a waste of their time.

Another concern is for other families we have met, who have been forced to leave school because of trauma or neurodiversity. These students weren't performing, and were never likely to perform well in a school environment. Why would you place an undue burden on these families?

This bill is apparently meant to be better for home educators and their children, but I'd like to ask how? Why is a standardised curriculum better than a tailor-made education program for each child? How is restricting our flexibility going to deliver an excellent education? Surely a tailor-made education will enhance the engagement of our children. I have spent many hours researching available curriculum from Australia and overseas to help me teach my children. I have looked for things that will suit and extend my children and ensure they are well taught by the end of their home education years. I do not want to throw away all these excellent resources we have spent thousands of dollars in purchasing, on the contrary, I want to allow my children to benefit from these and to be as highly educated as possible.

Another question is, for whom do these proposed changes actually benefit? They will definitely not benefit my children. They will not benefit me; this will increase my regulatory burden. I already spend 1 to 2 very full weeks every year, including working all through the night, preparing the annual reports, instead of concentrating on teaching my children and investing in being their parent. These proposed changes will also place a greater burden on HEU (who is already struggling with the influx of Home Educators).

To be honest I would be providing a high-quality education to my children regardless of whether the state government monitored me or not. What right does the state have to intervene in my children's education in the first place? I do not receive any government funding, but my choice to home educate costs us in both money and time. Why do I have to justify my decisions on what is the best way to educate my children, when the same doesn't apply to parents who send their children to school? If I am providing a high-quality education that doesn't follow the Australian Curriculum for my children, and my children are well cared for, thriving and flourishing, what protection do I have if I choose not to follow their stipulations? It is a parent's right and responsibility to educate their children and decide what is the

best way to do this, whether doing this oneself or delegating this responsibility to a school. The government only has this privilege when parents delegate their natural right and responsibility of educating their children to them. What protection is there for home educating parents from government overreach?

So, who are the changes meant to benefit?

It is interesting to note that Di Farmer states that key stakeholders including Home Educators were consulted and yet there seems to be an overwhelmingly negative response from Queensland home educating parents.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns. I hope that you will take my feedback into consideration and will amend the proposed Bill so that it will truly benefit the growing numbers of current and future home educators, where the goal truly is delivering a high-quality education for our children and seeking their overall well-being.

I look forward to hearing your response about this important issue.