

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 502
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

20/03/2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am compelled to write and express my intense opposition to certain key points contained within the current Education Amendment Bill in regard to Home Education.

It is my position that it is absolutely essential that:

- Homeschooling Registration in QLD should not require mandatory alignment with, or any mandatory reference to ACARA
- An easily accessible Provisional Registration process for the QLD Home Education unit, (HEU) must continue to allow parents to remove their child from school immediately and provide sufficient time for parents of children (who may be in crisis at this point) to seek support and information to explore educational options and learn how to write an appropriate learning plan that can be submitted after Provisional Registration is confirmed.
- Parents must remain the decision makers on which educational setting is appropriate for their children and not need to 'prove' this to register or enrol for Home Based Education.

On the topic of Provisional Registration

After listening to the Public Briefing on Monday, it struck me that in comparison to the proposed changes wanting to remove Provisional Registration,

– a mainstream school to school transfer would allow 90 days for documentation to transfer. Information that would contain vital details already known and documented, about the individual support needs of the student. They would need to begin at a new school – without any documented details of supports for up to an entire term.

However, if I am understanding the proposal correctly - if we as parents, are to suddenly and unexpectedly need to remove our child from mainstream and bring them home – (often in a medical/mental health or other family crisis) under proposed changes we would now need to have full knowledge of the Home Education Registration process, and provide a carefully constructed full 12mth learning plan to adequately accommodate and resource our child's support needs by – the next day - to register? A parent of a child in crisis would presumably, instantly need to know how to approach this major life change? Instead of comforting their potentially traumatised or seriously unwell child – they must focus on the paperwork process first? Provisional Registration with appropriate time to prepare a plan is essential.

Let me share just a snippet of my story -

Six years ago, I unexpectedly had to immediately resign from my employment, along with long held multiple voluntary positions.

I had to quit my entire former life, to Homeschool.

One of my children was experiencing what at that time, appeared to be a mental health crisis. It was actually much more than that. His behaviours were a symptom of an acute medical condition that if not discovered in time, would have been fatal. Had I not made the decision to Homeschool at that time and provide my personal support to him 24/7 he would not be here now. His symptoms were not believed at school.

Since then, I have devoted my every waking moment to caring for my children and navigating more paperwork, emotional highs and lows, logistical nightmares and household budgetary concerns than ever before – and yet, I have zero regrets about doing so, and I would do it all again, but much, much earlier to avoid the level of trauma that was caused by persevering far too long in the mainstream schooling system.

The decision to homeschool all three of my children was made at different times, they did not all leave mainstream at the same time. Each was due to a combination of – trauma, anxiety, lack of support for neurodivergence, bullying, lack of support for learning challenges such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia, lack of support for “school can’t” – or more often known as School Refusal – (which is a derogatory misnomer in many cases) All of which caused PTSD for more than one of us.

By the time I removed my youngest child from school, (the last of the three to switch) in mid-2019, it was a complete revelation.

Embracing Homeschooling saved my family. The ability to help my children learn and do what was of interest to each individual child in a way that was both engaging and supportive and worked for everyone, was an awakening.

An oppressive cloud lifted as we walked away from the daily stress of attempting Mainstream schooling. We could now learn whatever, wherever, whenever, and however is suitable – for us. This does not need to involve the stress of forcing any predetermined prepackaged ‘one size fits all’ curriculum that previously caused trauma.

It would absolutely not be in my child’s best interest to throw away our flexible way of learning and attempt to follow any mass designed mainstream curriculum, and certainly not to ever return to mainstream schooling.

I am unable to fathom how the authors of the proposed amendments for Homeschoolers to align with ACARA believe it would be beneficial to all children, or act as some form of protective or supportive change in any possible way.

On the topic of protection and wellbeing concerns, I am yet to discover any official government support body for home educated children or their parents (Other than HEU that simply outlines what our legal responsibilities are and approves our paperwork)

We create our own supportive communities. We understand the unique and varied challenges of other homeschooling families.

We are our own leaders, our children are our motivation to do this well, not tests and assignments and awards and box ticking.

All that would be achieved if these proposals become legislation is to inflict more trauma on our children, more paperwork, and extensive burden onto the backs of parents who are already doing everything in their power to ensure positive outcomes for their children’s circumstances.

For years, homeschooling families have advocated for our children's best interest by being with them, doing with them, loving them, protecting them, and for many of us, rebuilding them as they heal from what they experienced in the systems that were supposed to support them, but failed.

We are exhausted from having to advocate, survive and hope to thrive, and yet we will continue, because we must, and because we want to provide our children with everything they need.

I do wonder, and would very much like to know, whose suggestion it was to change the legislation to enforce ACARA on homeschoolers, remove Provisional Registration, and insist we prove that Homeschooling is best for our child before we even start, what their motivation was - and perhaps, most importantly - why they suddenly believe the current HEU requirements are no longer appropriate. I seek to understand why these suggestions were made and hope to help others understand why it is not the correct way forward.

It was suggested to me that there is deepening concern about the number of children that are home schooling without being registered.

There are many I'm sure, but this reasoning is flawed. Enforcing more arbitrary rules and regulations will not entice the unregistered to come out of the shadows. I'm certain it would achieve the opposite and encourage many others to join them should these changes come to pass. Only those that are already registered and already approved (or those that seek to be) under current criteria as providing a high-quality education will be affected by this additional workload.

As we are already providing what has been asked of us, why must we now change what works for our children? When my children struggled at school no-one in authority demanded more from their teachers, yet more is being demanded of us as parents. We are already providing one-to-one 24/7 support as and when our children require it. These proposals feel like punishment for daring to find a new and more supported way, one that works for us.

I implore you to understand that home schooling should never be forced to look like "school, at home". There are many highly variable reasons why homeschoolers have chosen to leave mainstream schools.

Thank-you for considering my thoughts on this important matter.