

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 530
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee members

As a home educating father, I do not support a number of the changes proposed to home education in the Education (General Provisions) and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

Firstly, I do not believe the Government has the mandate or ability to determine the best educational choice for individual children. It is the parents responsibility to determine what is in the best interests of their child. If there are concerns over a parents ability to parent or care for their children, that is a child safety issue, not an educational issue.

Secondly, making it compulsory to implement ACARA and the QCAA syllabuses in home education is nonsensical. These are systems designed for use in the schooling system and implemented by teachers. They are designed to manage large numbers of students to ensure consistency. There is no evidence that these systems provides a high quality education or that they are suitable to use in a home education environment that is one-on-one. In fact the evidence, as detailed in this submission, will show these systems are failing school children and producing very poor outcomes.

Finally, imposing onerous reporting requirements on home educating parents is pointless. It will prove nothing and will likely not even be read in most cases by the understaffed HEU. Imposing a higher level of proof on parents to prove progress, when this is not required by schools, is discriminatory, particularly when a number of home educating students have learning challenges and disabilities.

I am a home educating father that had to give up my job to home educate my children. My wife (a federal public servant) has continued to work but this means we are now a one income family. The schooling system had a very negative impact on my children. For months after leaving school, my twin girls were scared of any teachers, despite only going to school for six months of prep. They felt bullied by teachers that yelled at them regularly and told them they were on the "bad team". They also did not learn anything while at school, and it was then up to my wife and I to start from scratch and teach them how to read, write and do basic maths.

We have taken this job very seriously, putting in many hours researching appropriate resources that will work for our children - some of these would fall into ACARA, while others would not. We follow an eclectic approach, selecting the most engaging and appropriate resources for our children. Following a curriculum that is not working makes no sense and would be damaging to our children's future.

Our daughters have diagnosed learning challenges that would have seen them continue to fall further and further behind (while still moving up grades) if they had remained at school. The impact of this would have been terrible self esteem and no educational progress. Home education has allowed us to ensure they progress at their pace, while remaining engaged with learning. The most important skills that education develops is the ability to read, write and learn maths that is relevant for life. We are achieving this through home education and using resources that are working for our children. This would not be the case if we had to use the Australian curriculum.

Australia has very poor levels of literacy and numeracy as evidenced by the following: .

- According to the OECD, 40–50% of adults in Australia have [literacy levels](#) below the international standard required for participation in work, education and society.¹
- Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that 44% of Australian adults don't have the functional literacy skills they need to cope with the demands of everyday life and work. Low language, literacy and overall education attainment have a significant correlation to offending behaviour and subsequent incarceration rates in Australia.²

¹ <https://theconversation.com/yes-adult-literacy-should-be-improved-but-governments-can-make-their-messages-easier-to-read-right-now-164621#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20OECD%2C%2040,in%20work%2C%20education%20and%20society>

² <https://www.aracy.org.au/blog/literacy-begins-at-birth#:~:text=Figures%20from%20the%20Australian%20Bureau,of%20everyday%20life%20and%20work.>

- In Australia about 44% of adults read at literacy level 1 to 2 (a low level). People at a reading level 1 read at a primary school equivalent level. They can understand short sentences.³
- Only 12 per cent of Australian 15-year-olds are able to read at an advanced level. A report from the Grattan Institute says Australia is in the midst of a reading crisis. A third of children cannot read at the level expected of them at their age and too often when they fall behind, there are few or inadequate measures to help get them back to where they should be.⁴
- Data reveals that 13 per cent of Australian adults scored at the lowest levels in literacy and 20 per cent scored low in numeracy in the most recent national study, the OECD's 2012 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. According to Megan Lilly, head of education and training at Ai Group, poor education outcomes pose a significant work health and safety threat. One in five year 9 boys is functionally illiterate, while two in five Australian 15-year-olds don't reach the minimum standard in the OECD-run Program for International Student Assessment.⁵
- Around three million Australians have low numeracy skills, which means they struggle with the numerical reasoning necessary to cope with everyday situations (such as reading a petrol gauge).⁶

These are the outcomes being produced by Australian schools and clearly do not equate with a high quality education. Why would you put up this system as one to aspire to when the outcomes are at best a joke and at worse a national disgrace. My daughters at 10 years old, are now reading novels like Harry Potter. Guaranteed this would not be happening if we have left them in school.

My children are also active members of the community, attending an afterschool positive pump class, a drama class, highland dancing lessons (participating in competitions and exams) and an art class. They also attend weekly speech therapy at the University of Queensland. During school holidays they also attend a number of council sponsored kids activities.

I implore you to explore home education and actually find out how it is being implemented by everyday Queenslanders. You should not be basing your decisions on a few isolated cases or stereotypes. The vast majority of home educating parents are providing the best educational options for our children.

Kind regards,
Murray Tainsh

³ <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/literacy-and-access>

⁴ <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/one-in-three-aussie-kids-can-t-read-this-headline-grattan-20240211-p5f3zv>

⁵ <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/employers-are-being-forced-to-teach-reading-and-writing-bca-20230224-p5cnf6>

⁶ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264281110-6-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264281110-6-en>