

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Inquiry into Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the education bill in Queensland that was recently presented to parliament. As a home educating parent who has used a combination of Homeschooling and Distance Education, it appears that some of the proposals will restrict home educators' abilities to tailor educational programs to meet the unique needs of their students, including those students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

In particular, I draw attention to Section 217 -

Amendment of s 217 (Standard conditions) (1) Section 217(1)(b)— omit, insert— (b) the educational program used for the child's home education must— (i) be suitable for the child having regard to the child's age, ability, aptitude and development; and (ii) be consistent with an approved education and training program; and (iii) provide the child with a comprehensive course of study in a diverse range of subjects or learning areas; and (iv) include subjects or learning areas that are the study of English and mathematics; (ba) a parent of the child must give the chief executive a written report— (i) for the period the child is registered for home education; and (ii) in relation to each subject or learning area that is part of the educational program used for the child's home education;

Asking parents, whom are educating children, running households, often raising younger children as well, and some also working, to report on every single aspect of their child/ren's education over a 12 month period is simply not possible, leading to further stress and likely to shift home educators underground.

4) Section 217(2)(c)— omit, insert— (c) be accompanied by evidence satisfactory to the chief executive that demonstrates the educational progress of the child.

No language that specifies what will be considered satisfactory evidence? HEU families already have their yearly program approved and send in required samples of work showing improvement or progress. Do all children in public and private schools also require rigorous evidence to the satisfaction of the chief executive?

(5) Section 217— insert— (3) In this section— approved education and training program means— (a) the national school curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum)—

Approved education and training program – is that specifically and solely the National Australian Curriculum?

While I appreciate the intent behind ensuring educational standards, I believe it is crucial to recognise and respect the diverse approaches to education that exist within the homeschooling community.

The approach to mandate adherence to a standardised curriculum without delving into underlying reasons why many families choose homeschooling in the first place, fails to address the core issues at hand and risks further alienating families from the educational system.

It is crucial to acknowledge that homeschooling is often chosen by families for a variety of reasons, including social and emotional wellbeing, developmental differences and disorders, dissatisfaction with the traditional schooling system, concerns about safety and bullying, religious or philosophical beliefs, or a desire for a more personalised and flexible learning experience tailored to individual student needs. In my personal experience with knowing many homeschooling mothers and families over 20+ years, the latter is a common reason and extremely important especially considering it is well reported in the psychology field and widely accepted that children learn in different ways.

In regard to homeschooling, I like what Karen Chegwidden, President of the Home Education Association Inc says, "There is no-one in the world who is more committed to *their* child than the *parent themselves, which* results in educators who are highly motivated and highly invested in seeing their students succeed." (paraphrased) I will also add that most home educators do so entirely from their own finances, a high proportion in my experience, being from one income families, and do not get any government funding, thus they actually save the government thousands of dollars per student.

Rather than imposing stricter regulations, I urge the committee to prioritise understanding and addressing the root causes of the increase in homeschooling trends which have sparked the proposed amendments. This entails listening to and considering the feedback from homeschooling parents who are directly impacted by these legislative changes. Their insights and experiences are invaluable in shaping effective policies that support the diverse needs of families while ensuring the well-being and educational success of children, which ultimately should be the main focus.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns. It is my hope that, going forward, this legislation can suit the needs of all students across Queensland.

I look forward to hearing your response and respectfully request that due consideration is given to a written response as to what your position is on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Leesa Holyoak

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