

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 539
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Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Home-schooling Legislation

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in home-schooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum.

I am not a home-schooling parent. I am a grandparent and I am aware of home-schooling as an educational option as my daughter and her husband have chosen to home-school my two youngest grandchildren.

I have to admit I was a bit sceptical of the idea, as my understanding of home school was based on the new picture that media has projected over the years. I had visions of my daughter and her family moving to Bryon Bay or Nimbin living off the grid within a home school community. Strange as it seems but that is what I thought the home school communities were like, living by their own rules and very alternate.

When this is not how the Home School community actually is in real life, they all don't live off the grid (my understanding is some do) and that is what I feel that this proposed legislation will do as some children just don't thrive while working within the Australian Curriculum nor in a school environment, like my youngest grandchildren and some parents will feel as though they have no choice but to go underground and do what they feel is best for their children.

My daughter has 4 children, mainstreamed her 2 older children in State School and Special State School. So its not like Home School has always been my daughter's way of thinking. This only came about after my granddaughter started Prep in 2021, during that time we saw her regress and was a shadow of the bright, happy and so very smart little girl that started in the beginning of the year. By the end of the year she was filled with anxiety, biting all the skin off her fingers and nails, so very emotional at the thought of going to school and was not engaging in her school work while at school or dumbing herself down so that she could get one on one time with the teacher's aide like the other children in the class that were behind in their work!

It was after my grand daughter finished her year of Prep that my daughter looked for an alternative.

My granddaughter had also been bullied at school for almost the entire year, it was discussed at length multiple times with the staff at the school as it was always one child in particular that was targeting my granddaughter, the response always was that the other child was going through a tough time, came from a complicated family and they were working through the other child's issues as best as they could. But in the meantime my granddaughter was still subjected to the bullying and isolation the other child was submitting her to each day, by getting other children to rally with them and not let my granddaughter have any friends in the playground, even from other classes. AND this was in Prep, not high school this kind of behaviour was happening in Prep.

I do value attempts to benchmark and streamline education delivered by teachers in schools, via the Australian National Curriculum. I can appreciate teachers educate 25-30+ students at a time, these children are not their own children, and teachers usually change classes each year. Teachers seem to want and welcome some guidance as to what and how to teach, and benchmarks to assess their teaching performance against, so they can feel safe and successful in the job they are doing. I can appreciate that having standardisation around this would be

beneficial for all. And, as stated before my other grandchildren seem to be settle into mainstream school very nicely.

I have concerns about trying to enforce standardisation of this nature in the home-schooling sphere of education, though.

From my perspective, the essence of home-schooling lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with individual needs, interests, skills, abilities, and learning styles. I notice that the Australian National Curriculum is available to all and many home-school families draw upon it, even some follow it completely, as suits their own children's learning needs. Many, though, draw on other learning curriculums that are unsuited to school-based education environments but are very well suited to 1:1, 1:2, or even 1:5 educator to student ratios, and support their children to thrive in a way that would not be possible within the school environment.

My significant concern is that by imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes stand to impede this valuable alternative to a school-based education, resulting in worsened rather than improved outcomes for children, as the new proposal intends.

I am also wondering how these changes will be maintained and upkept by the current HEU, from my understanding each time my daughter submits a report and a plan for the next year there is a turn around of about 2 months, (almost 3 when initially registering). With these proposed changes how will the current HEU staff manage with the increased amount of reports required, when I know right now the reports that my daughter submits even for just 3 main subjects is quite lengthy, so I can imagine reporting on 8 subjects will indeed more than double the amount of each report that the HEU will need to review for each student. My understanding there is no extra budget for these changes, and it seems as though the current HEU resources are already stretched to their limit.

From my perspective, the best interest of children, and society in general, is likely to be served by maintaining real and distinct options for children and families when it comes to education, and supporting families to make mindful and informed decisions about educational matters.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely

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