

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Dr Santhini Haines
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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Advocating for Flexible Education Options and Curriculum Reform
Date: Tuesday, 19 March 2024 9:52:35 PM

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the inflexibility and overcrowded nature of the Australian Curriculum, particularly in how it impacts children's engagement and learning outcomes.

As a former secondary school teacher and a university lecturer in education, I strongly believe that there is an urgent need for more flexible schooling and learning options that prioritise the diverse needs and interests and learning styles of students, rather than adhering to a rigid and often outdated and irrelevant curriculum that often fails to resonate with many children and can lead to their disengagement from the learning process. The rigidity of the teaching/testing requirements imposed on the teachers too prevents them from adapting and modifying learning in individual classrooms. The Australian Curriculum, rather than being a useful template for learning has become a monolith in itself eroding teachers' professional agency, the confidence and enjoyment of students in and from the learning process. From my personal experience, I can remember when I decided to stop being a school teacher. That was when I just couldn't answer the question "why are we studying this now?" and I had to answer "because we have to".

I know from my personal, professional experience that a one-size-fits-all approach does not effectively cater to the unique learning styles, interests, and abilities of every student. Every child has an insatiable desire to learn from birth. They are curious, explorative, risk taking, confident learners. Recently, I have observed my grandchildren and have been struck by this innate desire to learn. Unfortunately, I have also often seen children losing this love of learning once they start school, when choice is taken away from them and learning becomes a top down process to be 'delivered' by an adult and that has to be completed within a time frame and then evaluated. This can result in a loss of motivation and enthusiasm for learning, which ultimately hinders their academic progress and personal development.

Therefore, I urge the committee to explore alternative schooling options that put the learner in the centre of the learning process, that offer greater flexibility and autonomy in curriculum design, delivery and settings. By providing more choices for families and educators, we can, as a society, create learning environments that are better aligned to the diverse needs and aspirations of our students. The increasing anxiety and school refusal reported even in the early years of schooling warrants us to be more creative and not rigid in how we approach learning and schooling.

Additionally, there is a pressing need for curriculum reform that genuinely prioritises essential skills and competencies that are relevant to the 21st century rather than just stating in mission statements that it is being done. Rather than adhering to a curriculum that feels arbitrary and disconnected from real world contexts, we should focus on cultivating critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and communication skills that are essential for success in today's rapidly changing world.

Therefore, I call upon the esteemed members of the committee to champion educational innovation and reform that empowers students to thrive in a dynamic, interconnected and inclusive world. By embracing flexibility, relevance and student centred learning approaches, we can create a more inclusive and responsive education system that prepares all children for lifelong success and fulfilment. We are not going to achieve this by introducing more rigid, top down approaches.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Santhini Haines

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Sent from my iPad