

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is [REDACTED]. I'm a year 11 home school student. I have been diagnosed with Autism, ADHD, PDA, and I also have PTSD from my traumas experienced in the school system. I've been to 3 different schools both state and private and I was bullied at every single school - both physically and mentally – by both students and teachers. Things got so bad that I attempted to commit suicide multiple times – both at home and in the classroom.

Homeschooling has helped me regain my ability and my willingness to learn. I really struggled in the mainstream system and found that I was being left behind. I left school at the beginning of grade 5 barely able to read and write.

However, homeschooling has allowed me to explore my interests, improve my skills and learn in a way that helps me succeed. So far, through homeschooling I have completed multiple courses including a Barista course, Safe Food Handling Course, Sailing – Stage 1 & 2 Certification, multiple cooking courses, and a horse husbandry course. I have also completed my First Aid & CPR certificates as well as my Bronze Medallion. Last year I achieved my Cert II in Automotive Electrical Technology at TAFE. I have achieved all of this by the age of 15. Certainly not something I could have achieved in the school system.

In addition to all of this I've been able to work on myself. I have been able to rebuild my self-esteem and improve my life skills. Through homeschooling, I been able to improve my reading skills by reading things that are of interest to me - without deadlines and without other children mocking me. My self-esteem and self-confidence are improving now that I do not have to follow the curriculum.

I watch my little brother (aged 10 – grade 5) who has never been through the school system - his self-esteem, his imagination and his love of learning is still intact. Although my brother has very similar disabilities to me, he is still a super happy, intelligent, well-adjusted, creative young man. I can't help sometimes but to be depressed and feel jealous that I had to go to school and have all the creativity and happiness sucked out of me by teachers who didn't understand Autism and refused to acknowledge my disability as well as being subjected to the current curriculum programme being used in schools that does not allow for creativity or out of the box thinking. It didn't allow for children like me who learn differently and school itself wasn't a safe environment for me with teachers and principals who refused to acknowledge I was being bullied until it was almost too late.

I know my parents would never have sent me to a second school if they had known that homeschooling was an option. My little brother has been able to be homeschooled his whole life. I've watched how well adjusted he is and wonder what my life would be like if I'd never had to go to school.

The thought of home schooling, with the freedoms we currently enjoy being taken away from my brother terrifies me. The thought that he may end up with the same issues that I have because someone decided to enforce the same curriculum onto him that almost cost me my life is scary.

Homeschooling isn't just sitting at home or doing school at home either. I know that once a year my Mum spends hours upon hours writing up our plans and reporting on what we've done for the year. Homeschooling takes place 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are always learning. My Mum makes sure that we are always building on our life skills, immersed in activities and opportunities to help us learn, as well as helping to prepare us for life after school. My Mum makes sure that we have lots of opportunities to spend time with other kids, that we get to travel, and we go on exciting and educational excursions - both as a family and with other home schoolers. If we were forced to follow the curriculum, we would not be given these opportunities to work on our life skills or to be able to socialise with other home schoolers. We would be trapped at home trying to achieve the work set out in the curriculum instead - and that would be devastating and so detrimental to our learning as well as our mental health.

As a person with disabilities, it concerns me that not enough consideration has been taken to ensuring that this does not adversely affect those with disabilities. Forcing everyone to follow the one curriculum seems rather ableist. To force everyone to use the one curriculum, whether it's what's best for them or not seems to go against the Disability Act – and against everything my Mum says home schooling is about - which is providing a high standard of education and opportunities for all children. If we aren't given the opportunity to follow different curriculums, or create our own based on our interests – learning how we learn and then using those techniques - then how are our parents meant to provide us with a high standard of education – especially if the current curriculum has already failed us? It would be like asking all school aged children to run a race – but we all had to wear the same style and sized shoe – it will be fine for some – but that shoe is going to fall off some people and blister the heck out of others.

I urge you – please do not force home schooled children to follow the ACARA curriculum.

Sincerely

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