

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

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Committee Secretary  
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
Via email: [eetsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:eetsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

**RE: Proposed changes to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the current Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

Currently, the majority of states and territories do not require home educators to be aligned with nor to make use of the Australian curriculum. Most state and territory regulations/legislation do not even make mention of curriculum.

### Key Points

Clause 68 – Provides, amongst other things, that any home education program must be consistent with an approved education and training program (defined as the Australian curriculum) and that a parent of the child must give the chief executive a written report for the period the child is registered for home education and in relation to each subject and the report must be accompanied by evidence satisfactory to the chief executive that demonstrates the educational progress of the child.

Clause 18 – Provides, amongst other things, that home education of a child should be provided in a way that is in the best interests of the child and also ensures they receive a high-quality education.

ACARA syllabus documents are designed for schools and were not designed for non-teachers to implement. Requiring parents to provide education in a content format that is designed for large cohorts of children rather than tailored high-quality education will be damaging to children, parents and families.

High-quality education is not defined by or limited to ACARA. The Australian Curriculum is a document developed for schools and teachers, not for parents. Additionally, the commonly used recognised alternatives (i.e. Steiner/Waldorf and Montessori) were also developed to be implanted in schools. A prescribed syllabus is not helpful in determining high-quality education as it applies to homeschooling families. Furthermore, a requirement to follow a prescribed syllabus carries a significant risk of reducing the richness of learning provided to children through alternative

educational options available to homeschooling families (e.g. unschooling, interest-based learning and project-based learning).

There are many children within my community for whom interest-based learning is a necessary option. This style of learning increases motivation and engagement for children in the learning process and leads to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Removing home-educating parents' ability to look at education outside of the structure of the Australian curriculum compromises home-educating families' ability to respond flexibly to their individual child's needs, interests and abilities.

ACARA was designed as a system attempting to facilitate the education of a large number of children grouped into same-aged peers and educated within organisations. The intention to apply this same curriculum to home-educating families is worrying and problematic and likely does a disservice to many children and families. An assumption that the Australian curriculum is a better option than individualised programs for homeschooling children appears to be an incredibly short-sighted and ill-informed way of avoiding meaningful educational reform.

Many have observed the alarming rate of mental health challenges in our youth. Academic pressure is one of the key contributing factors to this. With the ACARA, we see academic pressure for our children like never before. Children are under significant pressure to develop literacy skills and engage in structured learning far earlier than they are developmentally ready for or cognitively equipped for.

We are experiencing an insurgence of homeschooling, in my opinion, due to a growing recognition by families that our current schooling system requires reform in order to meet the needs of a wider variety of children (i.e. with ACARA being one of the factors contributing to this). Consideration needs to be given to how best to support children outside of the schooling system (or engage in a systematic review of the current mainstream education system).

Frequently, parents choose a path of home education when the mainstream school system does not meet a child's needs. It appears that a decision to homeschool is frequently being made due to a lack of fit between children and the school system, resulting in emotional, behavioural, social and academic difficulties for kids, which ultimately impacts their wellbeing. Families take a pathway of home education because they strongly believe in their rights to educate their children in a way they have determined best meets the individual child's needs. There is so little flexibility available within the mainstream schooling system to cater to the individual child that increasing numbers of families are joining the homeschooling community looking for a model of education that allows for a better (i.e. individualised) fit for their children.

One of the benefits of home education is that it allows each child to be considered and catered to individually. Requiring children to work systematically through a structured curriculum irrespective of their individual needs is not reasonable and removes families' abilities to choose educational pathways that have the flexibility required to meet the needs of individual children and families.

Having the freedom to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities and learning styles is the goal we should be reaching for in all areas of education, rather than enforcing a standardised curriculum on all children irrespective of their individual needs.

Reporting for homeschooling families is essential in many ways. However, the primary objective of this should be for the parents to have the opportunity to reflect and document their child's learning throughout the reporting period in a manner that is meaningful. This process should not be unreasonably onerous and should enhance parents' endeavours to educate their children. Furthermore, it should be an opportunity for the parent to be provided with any input and support (e.g. learning opportunities) required.

The expectations of a mainstream school environment are often unattainable and put pressure on children, which considerably impacts their well-being, self-concept and engagement in learning.

They are frequently unable to access the curriculum with the scope of support offered to them in mainstream settings. Equally, they are increasingly unable to access special education environments due to the narrow range of presenting problems and severity of problems that these environments are designed to cater to. Homeschooling has and can provide an unquestionably needed third option for these children. However, mandating home-educating families to follow ACARA would significantly compromise the potential benefits of home education for neurodivergent children.

Arguably, this group (i.e. neurodivergent youth), more than any other, can learn and thrive in settings that allow them to engage in interest-based learning and learning through their engagement with life (i.e. rather than through a standardised curriculum). Intrinsic motivation to learn and flexibility to learn at a pace that suits the individual child's developmental trajectory is, in my opinion, essential in this population for successful outcomes. Furthermore, any bill that forces home-educating families to follow ACARA is disadvantaging neurodivergent youth through the application of ableist principles and practices.

There are many reasons that education within a school setting and within a highly structured curriculum is challenging for neurodivergent youth, and the impact this can and often does have on them is incredibly worrying for families and practitioners and should also be worrying to our government. Even with significant support, many children are unlikely to thrive in this system. Increasingly, the school system's solution to the significant limits on their flexibility to meet the needs of neurodivergent children is to push for medication for the child and to expect conformity from children in a system that they are simply not "hardwired" to function well in. This in and of itself is a truly worrying reflection on the school system that requires urgent review.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,



**Stephen Andrew MP**