

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I have concerns about the updates to the home education portions of the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 Part 4 Amendment of Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, specifically two sections. The first concern is regarding the educational program requirements for home education found in Clause 68. "Clause 68 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" (page 68). The definition of the approved education and training program is then found in "(5) Section 217— insert—(3) In this section— approved education and training program means— (a) the national school curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum)" (page 69). First, the requirements of (b)(i) and (ii) contradict each other. The bill unhelpfully assumes that the educational program that in (b)(i) is "suitable for the child having regard to the child's age, ability, aptitude and development" will be the same as using (b)(ii) "an approved education and training program," specifically "the Australian Curriculum." Using the Australian Curriculum limits the home educator's ability to use the program best suited to the child's abilities and needs. Individualized learning is one of the primary strengths of home education. Individualized learning allows advanced students to excel in their learning, and individualized learning allows students who need extra help with specific learning areas to receive the extra help they need. Forcing a one-size-fits-all curriculum on home education students destroys one of the main benefits of home education. Under this new requirement, individualized learning will now be limited to what can be shaped to the individual through the Australian Curriculum instead of allowing the home educator to select a curriculum that best suits the child's abilities and needs. The second concern is also found in Clause 68. "Clause 68 Amendment of s 217 (Standard conditions) (1) Section 217 (1)(b)—omit, insert— (ba) a parent of the child must give the chief executive a written report— . . . (ii) in relation to each subject or learning area that is part of the educational program used for the child's home education;" (page 69). This new requirement that the home educator must now report on "each subject or learning area" of the student's progress significantly increases the reporting work. Currently, the home educator sends in an overall report on the year with work samples for three subjects each year. This new law will require at least seven subject submissions. Thus, the workload of the home educator as well as the Home Education Unit (HEU) will be more than double what was previously required. Three learning areas easily show whether or not the child is making educational progress, especially since the learning areas of Maths and English are required to be reported on each year. Requiring more simply leads to an abundance of examples. More than doubling the reporting workload leaves the home education teacher as well as the HEU chief executive less time to focus on the primary goal—educating the child. If the goal of the state is to assess whether children who are home educated are keeping up with the education provided by the public system, an alternative suggestion to these new requirements would be to have home educated children take the NAPLAN test or some other standardized test. Then the government would have another tool to use (in addition to the already required reports of education plans and work samples of home educated students) to have a fuller picture of whether the home educated student is receiving an adequate education. Thank you for considering these concerns.