


Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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23 March 2024

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Parliament House George Street, Brisbane, Qld, 4000
eetsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

RE: Concerns Regarding Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendments Bill 2024

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes to the amendments relating to Home Education in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

If these proposed changes are made, can the Committee confirm why it would be necessary for a Home Educator to provide an education plan? The need for a plan to be submitted would be negated by the fact that the Australian National Curriculum details the goals / objectives, learning areas and their requirements and the use of only an approved education / training program that is Australian National Curriculum aligned will make it pointless and obsolete. Why should a Home Educator have to submit a plan that they can't customise because of the restrictions put on them should this Bill be passed?

The essence of home education will be lost if these changes come into place. Home education provides freedom which allows children to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. By imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes would impede a child's autonomy and hinder their ability to pursue education in a way that best suits their requirements. Home educated children are currently offered a personalised, uniquely designed, and individualised education program. The education program is thoroughly researched for each individual and is made just for them using resources that complement them whether that be workbooks, life experiences, practical hands-on experiences etc. If these proposed changes come into effect, the education plan provided by the Home Educator would become meaningless and will largely force Home Educators to resort to workbooks which is only one way (and not necessarily the best way) in which a person learns (very narrow thinking here!)

Furthermore, how can a Home Educator take into consideration the age, ability, aptitude, and development of the child under these proposed changes when they are being required to adhere to a set grade? Isn't this a contradiction? Under this change how is a Home Educator supposed to report on say a child who might be classed as a Grade 3 level in Maths and a Grade 7 level in English but is actually only in Grade 5? How would a Home Educator report on this child's academic progress when their ability is so varied and not fully aligned to their actual Grade level? Needless to say, this Bill, if passed, would significantly restrict what is available to a Home Educator and their ability to provide a high-quality education for the child. It doesn't take into account the child's best interest at all nor is this best practice!

After watching the Bill briefing held 18 March 2024, thank you Committee Members for asking so many valid questions. Unfortunately, the answers provided were fundamentally dishonest and lacked robust evidence and research to substantiate the proposed changes to the Home Education section of the legislation. They were filled however with many a red herring and faulty appeal to authority.

It would be beneficial if the Committee sought further information about a number of items discussed during the Bill briefing including:

- Obtaining the names of who the 6 Institutions were that were consulted, including the consultation timeframe and how many of these Institutions replied within the timeframe provided, the quality of the reply and whether they actually represent the key stakeholders (i.e. Home Educators and Home Educated Children).
- Why were the 2 Home Educator key stakeholders denied participation in the consultation process (a phone call / email advising that they could not participate does not equal consultation)?

- A sample of 300 formed the basis of the argument behind the changes. This is 300 out of how many? Is this an accurate cross-section reference of Home Education in Queensland?
- 4/5 choose not to use the Australian National Curriculum. That's 4 out of 5 (or 80% of the sample)! How does this confirm that the curriculum is acceptable to Home Educators and Home Educated Children? The statistics just don't add up!
- How is the Australian National Curriculum classed as the only high-quality option? And for that matter, how does Australia's National Curriculum compare to the world in relation to education? Isn't the object at the end of the day to provide a 'high-quality education'? How can Home Educators provide this when they are being denied use of other resources developed and used in other countries which rate higher than Australia?
- With regards to the argument around needing a base-line for children who enter the school system after being home educated being the driving force for making the Australian National Curriculum the only approved education / training program, where is the evidence and statistics to back this up? Has consideration been made to whether they exited from the school system prior to home educating and if so, how long were they actually home educated for before entering / returning to the school system? Has any data been collected about the number of these instances versus those who are long-term home educated children who haven't ever commenced or returned to the school system since commencing home education? What percentage does this actually represent and does it warrant the introduction of mandating the Australian National Curriculum on ALL Home Educators and Home Educated Children? Furthermore, is there any data to confirm that when a Home Educated Child enters the school system that there is a significant gap in their learning?
- In relation to the safety concerns and the mention of the one unfortunate death of a Home Educated Child, was this child approved for Home Education? If so, that child's Home Educator fulfilled their responsibilities by providing an educational plan (or had obtained provisional registration) that was approved by Home Education Queensland. Additionally, what percentage is this one unfortunate death out of how many Home Educated Children at the time of this child's death? Is it really representative of the Home Education community? Is this overreach actually warranted?

I trust that the Committee will ensure they are all satisfied that the questions asked during the Bill briefing held on the 18 March 2024 were answered with substantiated evidence to prove why these changes are beneficial and warranted.

I implore the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures proposed to Home Education and instead focus on retaining the current approach, which provides a rich and diverse educational experience that meets the needs of each individual child.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my concerns.

Sincerely,

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