

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission regarding the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission by Rebecca Armstrong, Bachelor of Education Early Childhood, QCOT registered teacher

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I am opposed to the changes outlined in the Educational Law amendment currently being reviewed.

My concerns are as follows:

1. Being forced to follow the Australian curriculum will decrease engagement in learning for homeschooled students
2. Increased red tape will add stress to families who choose homeschooling and the HEU
3. It is inappropriate for the government to expect proof of homeschooling to be 'in a child's best interests'.

ACARA and the National Curriculum

Consistently academics and researchers have shown that people (not just children) learn best when they engage in deep and thorough investigation of topics that interest them. Experts are made by doing deep dive learning into one or two subjects. Where ACARA asks children to skim the surface of 8 learning areas, on the contrary we know that focusing on one area or interest leads to better understandings and deeper learning. During my teacher training at Queensland University of Technology I was inspired by passionate advocates of child education such as Dr Lyn Zollo and Professor Kerryann Walsh to draw from numerous curriculum documents to shape my teaching. Often we drew reference from international curriculum documents in addition to Australian documents. Most importantly we were taught about the processes within humans that lead to learning and therefore how to harness our teaching strategies to encourage the innate drive we have to learn from within our students. Curriculum was a side thought. What I spent 4 years learning was that excellent teaching doesn't come from a curriculum or a guide of things to be learned. Instead it comes from having a deep understanding of the learner and knowing how to harness their inner drive to learn which we all possess. Rather than improving learning over crowded curriculums and set/stringent learning guidelines lead to disengagement by the learner and frustration for both the learner and educator as they try to shape their round pegs into square holes.

Increased Red Tape

The biggest thing we know to be true about learning and teaching is that it requires interaction between both a teacher (parent educator in the instance of homeschooling) and the learner. We know this to be key which is why the discussion of class sizes and teacher/student ratios is always at the forefront of the debate when we discuss quality education. By increasing the reporting requirements for parents we are taking away from these high quality one on one interactions. Parents are already taking considerable time

from their other commitments to prepare a yearly report to meet the current requirements of Home Education registration. Increasing the paperwork load with an expectation to report on and provide evidence for all learning areas within the National Curriculum will have a direct negative impact on the amount of time parents have available to engage in the high quality interactions with their children we know are key to learning.

In a Child's Best Interests

Simply put it is inappropriate to have this statement within an Education Law relating to homeschoolers. While of course I agree with the statement my concern lies with who will be the judge of 'best interests'. This also suggests that currently the accepted 'best interests' of the child would be in sending them to school for 36hours a day to be taught by strangers. If the government was expected to show proof that attending a state school was in the individual best interests of each child in order for their enrolment to continue we would have thousands of school leavers. Examples of things happening in schools (from my own experience) that are not in children's best interests:

- Year 4, I witnessed a fellow student wet themselves in front of the class after being refused the opportunity to go to the bathroom on 3 separate occasions.
- During my teacher training, Year 2, [REDACTED] I witnessed a 7 year old girl break down in tears because she didn't understand what the teacher was asking her to do. When I attempted to comfort her and offer her my interpretation I was yelled at by the supervising and made to sit down. The girl sat their in tears for the rest of the lesson without completing any work.
- Year 4 again, I was made to disengage from the group learning activity after the class was asked to their raise hand if they felt I was bossy. This followed several months of working on my interpersonal relationships during sessions with a family psychiatrist which the teacher had been made aware of.

These negative experiences which, are just a drop in the ocean of the stories I have heard related to people's school experiences, have left trauma that certainly cannot be construed as 'in my best interests'.

In conclusion, if the government wants to improve learning outcomes for Queenslanders and support Queenslanders to access a high quality education we should be removing red tape and increasing support for highly motivated and invested parent educators who want the best outcomes for their children. No one makes the life altering decision to home educate if they don't believe this will be in the best interests of their child and their family. We should also be doing an overhaul of our overcrowded curriculum and broken school system to remove some of the barriers to school engagement that are driving people to home educate in the first place.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my views which I know are just a small reflection of a much bigger pool of home educating families in Queensland. I trust you will listen to the views of those that your law will affect most and reconsider these changes in the light of promoting the 'best interests' of our passionate homeschool students.



Rebecca Armstrong

Kind regards,

REBECCA ARMSTRONG

Bachelor of Education



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