


Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: 
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Submitter Comments:

Thursday 14th March 2024

Dear [Committee Members],

As a homeschooling parent of four neurodiverse boys, I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation in Queensland and firmly oppose them.

Homeschooling is not merely a choice but a necessity—an opportunity that has allowed us to create an environment where my children can thrive at their own pace and in their own unique way. Even our psychologist and paediatrician agree that homeschooling has enabled our children to thrive in ways they never did before.

It is disheartening to witness a focus on making homeschooling more rigid rather than addressing the systemic barriers that prevent many children with disabilities from accessing quality education in mainstream schools. Instead of imposing restrictive measures on homeschooling families, the committee's efforts would be better directed towards making mainstream schools more accessible and inclusive for all students, regardless of their abilities or differences. It isn't homeschooling that needs fixing; it is the school system that is broken and requires addressing.

Furthermore, suggesting that we follow ACARA places a significant burden on us as parents (we are not trained teachers equipped to deliver the curriculum), on the children who will no longer learn by interest, thereby stifling their creativity, inspiration, and motivation, and on HEU who will bear the burden of approving reports. The proposal indicates that only 10% of reports will be read, which precisely highlights the problem with the proposal.

Article 14 of the Human Rights Act stipulates that it is illegal to discriminate against disability and minority groups (homeschoolers are a minority group). The paperwork proposed by the new legislation is supposed to be required only of formally trained and university-educated teachers. Therefore, it would be considered unfair and punitive. The proposed Bill does not allow for a reduction of subjects or study areas to suit disabilities, nor does it allow for an exemption from reporting criteria to be applied to certain students due to disability. Some students are unable to meet ACARA and the reporting requirements stipulated due to their disabilities, which constitutes discrimination. Additionally, there is mention that all senior subjects must comply with QCAA subjects, with no stipulation in the bill that QCIA subject adjustments are acceptable for disabled children.

I was shocked to read in the legislation that we will need to justify our need to homeschool. How is that allowing me the right to choose my child's education by asking an HEU staff member to decide if we should be approved or not? This dismisses the years of specialist appointments, building support teams, and the support we create for my children and reduces it to a judgment made by a staff member who is in no way a professional in that area. Who says the government or

a department gets to decide what is best for my children? I don't recall handing them over to the state for their care!

My two eldest boys started at school but were faced with many challenges, including me being told by the deputy principal and learning support coordinator, "they are at the bottom of the priority list. There's nothing wrong with them; they are good as gold," after sharing their new autism diagnosis. Clearly, they were unable to see their multiple challenges, continual stress, masking all day long, and more importantly, we were offered zero support.

They faced severe anxiety, loneliness, either not being challenged in their learning enough or unable to keep up. We faced illness related to anxiety, days off started stacking up, we couldn't get a therapist in to support them, and eventually left when I was constantly met with visible eye rolls as I approached their teachers to advocate for their needs.

During weekly assemblies, they were told to sit down and be quiet, often making the whole school tediously repeat the action if everyone was too noisy, before subjecting them to watching the same handful of children collect numerous awards each week. There was no recognition of the kids for whom just showing up was a huge achievement; they only acknowledged the kids who "excelled" according to their system requirements.

Children with disabilities often face significant challenges in traditional school settings, where rigid structures and standardised approaches may not accommodate their diverse needs. Homeschooling has provided a lifeline for my children, offering the flexibility and personalised support they require to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment.

Instead of limiting the options available to families, we should be working to ensure that all children have access to a range of educational opportunities that meet their individual needs and preferences.

It is suggested that homeschooling children need to be provided with a "high-quality education" as per the HEU requirements below. Please see my responses to each of the requirements underneath.

- Responsive to the changing needs of the child as indicated by the short and long term educational and personal goals. Spending so much time with my boys, I am finely in tune with their needs, and we adjust our goals constantly in response to their abilities, desires, and interests.

This was not the case in the school environment where their teachers had no idea of their interests and often got it wrong. Nothing was changed around their goals, and the days/terms and teaching of the curriculum soldiered on regardless of their level of understanding of a concept.

- Has regard to the age, ability, aptitude and development of the child concerned. My boys are not always working at “grade level,” and again this is adjusted accordingly. They may surge ahead in one area and move more slowly in another.

Again this was not our experience at school where we were told they had to do extra work at home to keep up or were not extended when they were clearly above others despite requesting this.

- Conducted in an environment conducive to learning.

We live on acreage and in a beautiful area with beaches, horses, walks, a lake, and our own property where we have access to technology, a kitchen anytime we want to cook, resources, and books galore. We climb trees, rescue animals, nurture animals (including the current 200 native tadpoles we are caring for), and have swings and monkey bars to move when we need to give our brains a break and get moving.

This is vastly different from school where recess was a short 20 minutes, half of which was eating time being judged for not finishing or being told the food choices in their boxes weren't great. Not exactly helpful to a child with an eating disorder, and we classify any calories going in as a win! Lunch was similar, sitting (yet again) for half of it, then a short play break before returning to desk chairs or sitting on the mat in the classroom, not to mention the endless time spent lining up. iPad time, music, the library were all scheduled.

Girls were told not to do handstands, kids weren't allowed to climb the equipment during certain hours, balls weren't allowed, and every day we had to explain why these rules may have been implemented even though we too felt the logic behind them was nonexistent and controlling.

At home, our days flow in various ways, exploring all the world has to offer and delving deep into fantastic topics, while only briefly visiting others and learning all the while. Every moment is learning, whether it be life skills, communication skills, topics way beyond their supposed year level, or even way below because that is how it should be. Why should a child be told that once they turn a certain age, they need to be reading a certain number of words or counting to whatever number? Our kids climb trees, dig in mud, can research, code, cook, build, garden, and, most importantly, combine curiosity with play.

- Responsive to the child's need for social development. My boys are anxious, and we have varying degrees of anxiety, including selective mutism and social anxiety, and have different anxiety medication scripts. We cater to all

of their needs, including finding online groups or homeschool groups for them to socialize according to their needs.

At school, "buddy" benches were set up to help more timid ones make friends. My younger son sat on it every day, and no one came to get him. It's all very well to implement this kind of thing, but another to then not monitor it. He was heartbroken daily with the playground being too overwhelming for him. My eldest was bullied by the "cool" kid who he felt intimidated by so he became "friends" with him to protect himself and was treated poorly not understanding if he was a real friend or not.

- Engages the child in a range of rich and varied learning experiences.

I am able to use what works for my boys, not deliver a prescriptive style of learning that won't engage them because they just aren't interested in it. We have covered things like knitting, circus skills, cooking, science, STEM, creating websites, building a business, life skills, nature, sports, coding, music, arts, technology, foreign languages, etc. The diversity of topics is simply so great and just isn't able to be offered in the school environment, which is all kept very vanilla.

- Supported by sufficient and appropriate resources.

We are able to access a huge number of resources, both paid and free. There are endless numbers and are incredible. Schools can only provide some resources and only at specific times or stages, and they can't be individually chosen. We always commented on seeing 25 ladybird paintings on the wall or 25 projects that were all the same. One of my boys was told not to paint something a particular way as it wasn't the same way as everyone else. No individual expression was allowed!

- Uses strategies for monitoring educational progress.

I monitor constantly as they are my children. We keep records, take photos, diary entries, resources, and complete projects that clearly show and monitor progress. We have family meetings, work as a team, set goals, review our learning/growth, and give feedback to each other. We celebrate our wins and losses knowing mistakes is where growth happens!

As homeschooling parents, we have witnessed firsthand the incredible growth and achievements of our children, and we adamantly believe that the current homeschooling system should remain untouched. My children are now not just thriving; they are excelling in every facet of life and are addressing their challenges in supportive and low stress way.

From academic accomplishments to personal development, they are demonstrating resilience, creativity, and a passion for lifelong learning. This success is a testament to the dedication and commitment of homeschooling parents who prioritise their children's holistic development and tailor their educational experiences to meet their unique needs and interests.

Homeschooling allows our children to pursue their passions, delve deeply into subjects that captivate their curiosity, and develop the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen paths.

By following their own learning interests and setting goals tailored to their personal futures, homeschooled children are empowered to take ownership of their education and chart a course that aligns with their unique talents and ambitions. This personalised approach fosters a sense of agency and self-efficacy that is often lacking in traditional school settings, where children may feel constrained by rigid structures and standardised expectations.

I have a 14-year-old who taught himself how to maintain and repair mountain bikes better than the guy at the repair shop. He started his own repair business and has had happy customers. He still has a huge passion for mountain biking but has incorporated learning the piano and digital photography, which he is starting his next business in and has won both competitions from the new photography group he is part of. He has international and local penpals, is a great handyman, and has been practicing learning French every day for the last 10 months because he felt like it.

My 11-year-old is incredibly complex yet so nurturing and has raised chicks, cats, and now tadpoles. He is also very physical and is great at learning circus skills and physical challenges. He loves science and knows all about dinosaurs and the periodic table. He has an eating disorder and this relationship with food is so delicate that a pressurised environment causes regression. He has incredible recall but is terrified of getting in any kind of trouble whether it be real or perceived. This means he is a masker and people pleaser who sadly is able to "perform" under stress, something the school environment made worse and teachers were clueless about.

My 8-year-old taught himself to read at the age of 4 and had the reading age of a 7-year-old by the time he was 5. He taught himself how to swim because he wanted to keep up with his brothers. He learned to code and can write code better than his father, who wrote his own website. He is now learning how to play the ukulele and loves to bake, cook, and build things.

My 6-year-old has high anxiety and severely struggles with pressure of any kind. His learning takes a very careful approach, yet despite this, he has taught himself to read most sight words and is now doing prodigy maths like his brothers. He knows all about space and rockets and has a very inquisitive mind that takes us all over the place with research.

We firmly assert our right as parents to educate our children. They are our children, and we know them better than any system ever could.

Homeschooling provides a sanctuary for our children—a safe and supportive setting free from the pressures and pitfalls of bullying that often plague traditional school environments. In this nurturing atmosphere, they are free to explore, experiment, and grow into confident and compassionate individuals.

It is essential to recognise that there is not one singular way to educate a child. Homeschooling empowers parents to teach their children how to learn, not just what to learn, laying the foundation for a lifetime of intellectual curiosity and personal fulfilment.

As these home-educated children grow into adulthood, they continue to make significant contributions to society, enriching our communities with their diverse talents, perspectives, and values. We need more of these success stories, not less.

Let me be unequivocally clear: homeschooling families do not wish to follow the national curriculum. We firmly believe that we can provide a high-quality education for our children without being shackled by its restrictive, limiting, and shallow constraints. Rather than serving as a guide for excellence, the national curriculum operates as a minimum standard document designed for teachers who undergo years of training to interpret and implement it effectively.

For homeschooling families, the national curriculum represents a yoke that threatens to stifle the boundless potential of our children. We aspire for more—more creativity, more depth, more relevance, and more individualisation tailored to the unique strengths and interests of each child.

If the committee truly wishes to be educated on homeschooling, I extend an invitation to witness firsthand the incredible achievements of my children. I am proud to showcase the remarkable projects, accomplishments, and growth that stand as a testament to the power and effectiveness of homeschooling. These achievements do not align with the national curriculum—and that is precisely the point.

Sincerely,



Please also see attached submission by Dr Rebecca English (Senior Lecturer - School of Education and Leadership - QUT) who has completed extensive research into this area.

Submission

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

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Overview of concerns about the changes proposed to home education:

I have four main concerns about the proposed bill, which is drawn from (1) my work as a researcher examining why parents choose alternative education, especially home education, (2) my 25 years of experience as a teacher and (3) my nearly 20 years as a teacher educator. These five concerns are:

- The increased compliance burden will drive families underground.
- A misunderstanding of the reasons families choose home education.
- The implementation of ACARA and the QCAA syllabuses, and the impact on currently recognised alternatives.
- The requirement for parents to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child.

I will address each of my concerns below.

Compliance and home education:

The Office of the Deputy Director General, in the Teams meeting held on March 12, implied much of this regulation is in response to a story, published in The Courier Mail, about a 'cult' that was home educating. As such, it appears this legislation is an attempt to force families to teach the Australian curriculum and stay in school while

allowing the department to evaluate a full plan among proposed other compliance requirements.

While research into home education registration and reporting requirements is limited (Kammann, 2015; Krogh & Liberto, 2021), researchers (Muscatine, 2020; Krogh & Liberto, 2021) have consistently suggested **onerous compliance requirements lead to disengagement**. In my own work, I have noted that there are already **significant issues with under-registration in Queensland** (English & Gribble, 2021; English, 2023) which supports ABC analysis from 2012 (Townsend, 2012) which suggested while official figures identified 951 homeschoolers in the state, there were 12,000 unregistered homeschoolers. Further, the department's own review of home education in 2003 showed that **significant numbers of families were not registered** because of a **fear of government intrusion**, a **perception of a hostile regulatory environment**, a **belief the department did not understand home education** and homeschool families' needs, and **over-regulation** (Jeffrey & Giskes, 2004). These issues persist (Euka, nd) and this legislation will do nothing to ameliorate these 20-year-old concerns.

Registration and reporting requirements vary by location with some locations requiring high levels of engagement with authorities which can be a barrier to legal homeschooling (Ray, Shakeel, Worth & Bryant, 2021) and others, including some parts of the USA and currently the UK, requiring no engagement with authorities at all (Lees & Nicholson, 2021). In other countries, such as China, it exists in a grey area of semi-legality where engagement with authorities seems to be discouraged (Liu, 2022). In all cases, as noted by Krogh and Liberto (2021), there is **evidence that ensuring the legislation is achievable and families feel supported** in engaging with regulators is shown to **balance states' needs to regulate education and parents' rights to choose** the education that suits their child in a democracy (Apple, 2020; Hamilton, 2022). This need to further determine that balance in Australia was evident in the New South Wales inquiry in 2014 (Parliament of New South Wales, 2014), a process in which I participated and gave evidence.

Why parents choose home education:

In addition, the apparent desire to address the issue of ‘cults’ and home education fundamentally **misunderstands the reasons parents choose to home educate**. It is important to understand what research shows about why families choose home education. Researchers (see English 2021a for a discussion of the issues around theorising home education choice), over the past 30 years (see Van Galen, 1991), have shown that **families consistently choose home education when other educational options are perceived to have failed them**. Recently, there has been a growth in home education after the pandemic when parents saw what was happening in classrooms during the online schooling phase of the lockdowns (see English, 2021b) and were not happy with the ways classrooms were being managed (English, Campbell & Moir, 2023) and what was being taught (Preethi & Lawrence, 2021).

Research (Neuman, 2021; Neuman & Oz, 2021) have shown that families report high levels of dissatisfaction with mainstream schooling and do not believe it is being conducted in their child’s best interests. However, this research also shows that **parents who choose home education are responding to what is perceived to be schools’ failure** to teach properly, manage behaviours, both those of their child and that of other students, and the inability of curriculum to be flexible and adaptable to students’ needs. **Families choose home education not because they want to, but largely because they feel they have no other choices** (English, 2021a; 2021b; 2022). If schools were perceived to be effective at meeting children’s needs, and at educating their children in ways that met their needs, families consistently report that they would keep their children in schools (Green-Hennessy & Mariotti, 2023). In the past this decision was not set, with families exiting home education to return to schools (Allen & Jackson, 2010), however, increasingly once they exit the system and enter home education, they tend to stay (English et al., 2023) unless a major life event (such as the death of a partner) changes their situation (Sheng, 2024).

ACARA and the QCAA syllabuses:

There are several points that are concerning in this area. The first is the **lack of clear statements** of the **capacity of parents to teach a recognised alternative**.

ACARA states that their charter involves the assessing of curriculum, other than ACARA, that meets the requirements of the national curriculum (ACARA, 2023a). Waldorf/Steiner was assessed as meeting the requirements in 2023, and is identified on the recognition register (ACARA, 2023b) but it is not clear that the wording of the curriculum in Section 217 (3)(a)(ii) “published on the authority’s website” means the recognition register as it is separate from the main business of the authority. In addition, Montessori, an approach approved to be used in schools across Queensland, is not listed on the register. It may be that families using Montessori curriculum may not be able to use that curriculum in their home education.

The second point is that ACARA’s role is, as noted on the website, “the development and ongoing refinement of the Australian Curriculum, national assessment including NAPLAN, and reporting on schooling in Australia” (ACARA, nda, ¶3). The curriculum is proposed to be required for all home educators in Queensland however, that is inconsistent with its purpose. ACARA (ndb, nd, ¶1) states:

the Australian Curriculum describes to teachers, parents, students and others in the wider community what is to be taught and the quality of learning expected of young people as they progress through school.

As is evident from the quote above, **the Australian Curriculum is a specialist document, designed for teachers and schools, so that learning can be consistent in schools across the country**. Its specialisation is evidenced by all teachers requiring an education degree in Queensland to be registered. Registration as a teacher in Queensland with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) requires prospective applicants to demonstrate they have a four-year equivalent degree in education/teaching and are able to implement the Australian curriculum, or a recognised alternative demonstrated through their professional practice in the degree (QCT, nd).

The third point is the senior phase of learning. The new legislation proposes the use of **Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) syllabus**

documents to align senior learning in home education with learning in schools. However, these **cannot be properly implemented in a home setting**. As the QCAA (2024, ¶1) notes:

In Queensland, a syllabus for a senior subject is an ‘official map’ of a senior school subject. A syllabus’s function is to support schools in delivering the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system through high-quality and high-equity curriculum and assessment.

As this quote demonstrates, the syllabuses are for schools to use to effectively implement, under the guidance of the QCAA, senior syllabus documents in line with the awarding of a QCE and the determination of an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

Effective implementation of senior syllabuses requires schools, usually through Heads of Department (HoDs) or Subject Coordinators, to work with the QCAA to ensure the syllabus intentions are met and consistently applied between different schools. They do this work through the development of study plans. Study plans must be approved by the Authority 12 months before they are implemented. The QCAA (2024, ¶1) outlines the process as “schools create and submit study plans in the Study Plan application via the QCAA Portal” Once the plan is developed and has been assessed as consistent with QCAA requirements, “QCAA officers review and approve study plans” (2024, ¶1).

Study plans outline student learning and assessment for a four-unit course of study. They are each school’s plan of how the course of study will be delivered and assessed based on the relevant Applied syllabus. To be approved, the study plan must meet syllabus requirements. To plan the course of study, schools use the syllabus and the Study plan requirements resource available in the Syllabuses application via the QCAA Portal.

(QCAA, 2024, ¶2)

The quotes above demonstrate it is impossible to effectively implement the QCAA senior syllabuses in a home education setting. The QCAA cannot be required to approve the study plans of parents who are not trained in the implementation of senior secondary syllabuses. It is generally accepted that only senior teachers,

HoDs, and those in positions of added responsibility are required to develop and submit these plans to the QCAA.

While the QCAA notes that home educators can apply for a QCE through the Home Education Unit (HEU), it is not clear HEU staff will be able to meet the administrative burden of families implementing the four-semester study plan and submit these for approval to the QCAA. Further, the QCAA deals with schools, it is also unclear whether they will be able to meet the administrative burdens of dealing with hundreds of home educators who need to have study plans approved to implement them in line with the QCAA syllabuses.

Best interest of the child

Queensland has the highest growth in registered home educators in Australia; experiencing a 194% increase in the five years to 2023, data show significant numbers of homeschool families do not register (English, 2023) with suggestions that between 50% and 80% of the total home educating population are unregistered (Euka, nd; Tablelands Home Education, nd). Under-registration is a long-term problem, with the ABC suggesting there were 170% more Queensland homeschoolers than officially registered in 2012 (Townsend, 2012). Similarly, in 2003, when a review was conducted into homeschooling in Queensland, data (Jeffrey & Giskes, 2004) showed significant numbers of families were not registered. The 2006 legislation covering homeschoolers was an attempt to correct that under-registration (Jeffrey & Giskes, 2004).

It may be that the legislative change, in relation to the 'cult' that seems to be underpinning the move to strengthen curriculum and reporting requirements for home educators, is a response to these data. However, it appears to fundamentally misunderstand parents' reasons for choice, as noted above, and the idea of the best interest of the child, noted in Section 7 (da)(i) and taking into account their safety and wellbeing.

First, **a perceived failure of schools to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their students are known drivers to home education** (English et al., 2023). Bullying, for example, and the schools' perceived failure to keep children safe either through failing to manage bullying and other issues (such as in the English et al. paper where a participant reported the school lost a child's EpiPen and the participant reported finding it under some chairs in the school hall) is not consistent with keeping children and young people safe. As Neuman (2021) noted, **if schools were effective in keeping young people safe and secure, they would stay in schools**. In addition, anxiety is often linked to schooling issues and is also an issue with regards to keeping children safe (see Riley, 2023).

Second, one of the main outcomes of schools' reported failure to keep children safe is the increase in school refusal. The numbers of **young people refusing school has increased** so much that it was the topic of both a Federal Senate Inquiry (Clark, 2023) and a senator's survey (Duffy, 2023). Senate Inquiry data from 2022 show more than half of all Australian students were attending less than 90% of school days (Clark, 2023) while the senator's survey released to the ABC showed that 39% of parents had experienced school refusal, where the child would not attend school at all (Duffy, 2023).

School refusal is associated with severe emotional distress experienced while attending school where, despite repeated attempts to remedy the situation through school interventions, the symptoms disappear only when the child stays home (Havik & Ingul, 2021). **This legislative change**, and its attempt to **replicate a school-like setting in the home**, is **not likely to be effective** with this community, which may be up to 80 per cent of the home education population. The cohort of school refusing students seeking a non-school approach is driving the growth in home education (English, 2021a; 2021b).

The effect of school refusal is often described as dire. For example, recent research (Lamb & Huo, 2017) suggested it costs the Australian economy ~\$13 billion annually. School refusal is said to risk unemployment and isolation for the school refusing young person (Havik & Ingul, 2021). It impacts the parents of the school refuser who

must stay home to look after the child. Schools are affected because they are tasked with implementing interventions that are frequently unsuccessful (Duffy, 2023).

However, it is unlikely to be as dire as the above suggests. The 2023 survey suggested school refusers are (1) not engaging in anti-social behaviours, (2) not hiding their absences and (3) happy to learn at home in a more relaxed and less 'school like' manner (Duffy, 2023). The Senate Inquiry (Clark, 2023) and survey (Duffy, 2023) showed there are many reasons a child refuses school, and many events that lead to it, however, we do not understand enough about the issue (Black, 2023). But, we do know they are frequently found in the home education population (English, 2021a; 2021b). Despite school refusal numbers increasing post-pandemic (Clark, 2023), current approaches tend to endeavour to 'force' school refusers back to school (Heyne, 2022) with 'tough love' strategies that do not work (Duffy, 2023; Fisher, 2023). **Research in home education (Moir & English, 2022), suggest increasing enrolments in home education are driven by students exiting schools which, as recent international (Fisher, 2023) and Australian (Duffy, 2023) research shows, is preferred by school refusers because home education is unlike school.**

Third, **home education has been found to have positive outcomes for the child that experiences it** (Ray, 2021) regardless of the curriculum approach taken (highly structured to unstructured), with the likely positive effect being the interventions of the parent (Martin-Chang & Levesque, 2017). A review of the literature in the field (Valiente, Spinrad, Ray, Eisenberg & Ruof, 2022) argued it was effective. Valiente et al. (2022) noted methodological limitations in many studies suggesting homeschooling outperformed traditional or mainstream approaches. However, they cited research (Murphy, 2012; National Education Association, 2020; Ray, 2017) which **showed there is no evidence it places children in any risk of harm, or at risk of more harm than other educational approaches** (including mainstream school, unregistered schools, specialist schools or religious schools). They stated, "we do not find systematic evidence that homeschoolers typically experience problematic academic or socioemotional outcomes" (Valiente et al., 2022, p. 52) regardless of the curriculum approach implemented. Further, as Hamlin and Cheng

(2022) found, research indicates no statistical difference between short and long term homeschoolers to argue that **the practice does not negatively affect the social or educational opportunities of homeschoolers** in the USA regardless of the approach the parents take. **As such, the use of curriculum is not positively correlated with success in home education, home education is successful because the child is educated at home.**

Interestingly, in a large review of the literature, Kunzman and Gaither (2020, p. 304) argued that the issue at play in both research and legislative spaces is that, homeschooling [continues] to challenge modern conceptions of schooling, education, and the family. Conventional categories of schooling, curriculum, and achievement will continue to blur, shifting not only participants' conceptions of education but very likely broader society's as well (Lees, 2011).

Concluding statement

As Kunzman and Gaither (2020, p. 304) stated, **"Homeschooling ... pushes us to consider ... the purposes of education more broadly"**. This point is likely to be at issue in this legislation and may be the root of the issue here, homeschoolers and the department see education differently.

What it means to be an educated and productive member of the Queensland population in 2024, and beyond, appears to be a significant, if unstated, concern of this legislation. However, the approach proposed to be legislated in this bill is **likely to have only one impact: driving homeschoolers underground** as they consider questions of education, of productive social membership, of democracy and of choice more deeply, in part due to their reported negative experiences in schools.

It is incumbent on governments to consider not just how to better legislate these families so that they can be monitored and discouraged from joining 'cults' but really contemplate the deeper issues around what it means to be an educated citizen in 2024 and beyond and whether schools are able to provide that in every instance.

The growth in home education, here in Queensland where the numbers of legally registered home educators have grown 194% in the five years to 2023 but also across the world, **suggests that schools are not meeting parents' evaluations of Section 7(da)(i)(ii) of the legislation as they are not perceived to be providing an education in the best interests of the child or young person taking into account their safety and wellbeing; and the school did not ensure the child or young person received a high-quality education.** As noted above, if schools were perceived to work, parents would keep their children and young people enrolled in them.

Considering the points made here will help the state ensure its ability to follow and monitor home educators more effectively than increasing the burden of compliance with curriculum that has already been rejected by vast numbers of the home education population. Bringing them back into the legal fold, and encouraging compliance, will require a softer touch than evidenced here.