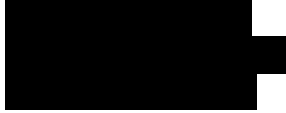


Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Kelly Wynter
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Kelly Wynter



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Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing in response to the proposed Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 to raise concerns about the proposed changes for homeschooling “requiring the educational program for a child registered for home education to be consistent with the Australian Curriculum” and “the new guiding principle providing for the primacy of the child or young person in relation to the way home education is to be provided, stating that it should be provided in a way that is in the best interests of the child or young person, taking into account their safety and wellbeing, and ensuring the child or young person has access to a high-quality education.” I also apologize for the length of this, but I feel every detail is important to understand.

As a homeschooling parent in a widely growing community of likeminded people, I entirely understand the need for changes in home education, however, I’m concerned about the possible negative impact these could have on my three children who have found more success in the home learning environment than at school, two of which were recommended to be schooled at home by the school guidance officer and teachers as they can not provide the support in school that my children needed due to the lack of teachers and supports the school had available to them.

In order to understand my concerns and the concerns of others you need to understand where it is we are coming from because we can say we disagree all we want in different ways and why we disagree with these proposed changes, however, what difference will it make if you don’t understand our core reasonings for homeschooling in the first place.

I first chose to homeschool my youngest child (will be referred to as Mr 8) after being convinced by the school guidance officer that it would be in the best interest for him emotionally, mentally, and educationally. His psychologist was hesitant to begin with as he wasn’t familiar with the homeschool approach, however, since Mr 8 started 2 years ago, the psychologist now not only supports homeschooling for him, but recommends it for the foreseeable future.

Mr 8 has a multitude of diagnosis (ADHD, ASD level 2, anxiety disorder, and PDA [pathological demand avoidance] currently not recognised by the DSM-5) that prevents him from being able to be in school but doesn’t hold back his mind. Now every parent likes to spout how intelligent their child is and I’m not going to be much different, Mr 8 couldn’t learn in the traditional style when we tried school with him during prep and grade 1; whilst other children were learning to read using books, worksheets, and the curriculum standards for learning how to read, he was learning to read from takeaway menus, catalogues and instruction manuals because it was more engaging for his mind, it then grew to reading non-fiction well beyond his years and this advanced thinking and capability from him didn’t just stay with English, it carried over into every subject.

Mr 8, in grade 2 developed severe sensory and anxiety based school refusal and we would get up to four daily meltdowns trying to get him to attend which was breaking him psychologically, this went on for a little over a month before the school guidance officer guided me to homeschooling and now I have a whole different child who not only engages in his learning but seeks it out on a regular basis. At home he doesn't have to deal with the over sensory problems of bright lights, lots of sounds and too many people; he has a consistent routine that doesn't change which is something schools cannot provide and he has the flexibility to learn beyond the curriculum in his way and at his pace which takes away the pressure of it being a demand (PDA) because he has some control over how he learns.

Last year, I then started teaching both his sisters at home for similar and different reasons. The first one should have been learning at the same grade that by curriculum standards Mr 8 is in being grade 3. For this I'm going to refer to her as Miss 9. Now, she is one of the many that fell through the cracks after covid, delayed in every way possible and zero support in the school to help catch her learning up.

Miss 9's Teacher, guidance officer and even the principle herself told me personally that the school didn't have enough supports or spare staff in order to help the children falling behind and that they are required to follow the curriculum even if it means children fall behind, to top it off at the end of each school year, the school sends the kids home with all their work books from the year and after looking over them myself I began to wonder if the teachers even know how to teach a class as Miss 9 had been marked correct throughout her work on everything that was incorrect, which only teaches children that the wrong answers are the right ones.

By homeschooling Miss 9, I did in ten months what the school couldn't since covid, and I got her learning from prep to grade 3 by focussing on the fundamental principles of each subject which is not something I would have been able to do if I had to focus on the curriculum. Miss 9 also has dyslexia which was not caught by the school, if I hadn't chosen to homeschool her it would have gone under that radar for who knows how long like it had done with her older sister because she thought that how she was seeing everything and writing everything backwards was normal due to no teacher bothering to notice, correct her or help her and their reasoning was that they had a class of over 35 students and can't focus on just one.

Lastly, I started homeschooling the eldest of my children henceforth known as Miss 13. She should be learning year 8 this year however her delay started the year before covid and was not noticed because as Miss 13 said to me, "the teachers don't see the difference between us knowing something and guessing the answers". Covid made her learning delays worse and suffered the same lack of support and additional learning methods that could have been used to help her catch up as most other children.

Miss 13, last year asked to be homeschooled when she wasn't handling the high school environment as she is also ASD, it didn't help that the curriculum the high school was trying to teach her, she couldn't understand because the teaching method is completely different than in primary school and it required her to read more to which we then discovered she has dyslexia; "the words swim around the page" as she worded it. The high school also made the comment that much of what was being taught initially, she should have known the basics from primary school.

Upon starting Miss 13's learning at home last year, I had her assessed educationally and have had to spend the last year instead of teaching grade 7, supporting her up from grade 3. She couldn't handle or understand simple mathematics and I have had to sit with her to explain how

to work through the problems; gramma she had to learn all over again starting with parts of speech, punctuation, sentence structure and most recently formation of paragraphs. I have had to teach her creative and critical thinking skills she should have learned in school, the difference between answering questions as a fact or opinion. Since starting to homeschool her in the second term of last year until now I have taught Miss 13 the basics, principles, and anything else she needed to be able to complete her high school learning and supported her in more ways than a school ever could. She went from being grade 3 to finally able to work on her grade 7/8 work this year.

As parents, we send our kids to school with the understanding that the school knows what they are doing in teaching, guiding and supporting our children using the curriculum that you want to enforce on homeschoolers so imagine my surprise when Miss 13 as I was writing up her HEU education plan kept pointing out the multitude of curriculum learning she was never taught in her Primary school.

My biggest question is this, why make homeschoolers follow a curriculum that the schools themselves shortcut around?

Next, how are you going to determine what's in the best interests of our children when their needs are going to be so individualized?

Understandably the scale of homeschoolers that are continuously increasing might be a concern to the government in that there aren't any real procedures in place to ensure our children are being taught supposedly as well as they would be exposed to in a school system, however, from many parents and not just my own standpoint, we are homeschooling our children because there are not any real procedures in place to make sure the schools are following learning of the highest standard let alone the curriculum and we are teaching our children far better than the schools are.

Yes, there are problems in the education system, but look to the schools if you want to fix something because I can assure you, the blanket is being pulled over your eyes. I'm going to leave you with something Miss 13 told me once that left me disappointed in the school more than anything. "We always learn more when they have officials and important people visiting the school, after they leave it's like the teachers don't care". Yes, there are loads of problems in school that is being worked on, but I think teaching standards and higher grade of educational support should be added to that list more than messing around with how we homeschool.

Sincerely
Kelly Wynter