

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 779
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Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Submission

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Author's name	██████████
Organisation	Home-educating parent, registered family with HEU

*Please redact all identifying features before publishing

I do not agree with the proposed changes to the education act.

Overview of concerns about the changes proposed to home education:

I have four main concerns about the proposed bill. These four concerns are:

- The implementation of ACARA and the impact it will have on currently registered families
- The requirement for parents to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child.
- The increased compliance burden will drive families underground
- The submissions process and informing HEU registered families if the proposed changes

I will address each of my concerns below.

The implementation of ACARA and the impact it will have on currently registered families

In the most recent committee briefing, it was stated that 20% of (registered) homeschool families choose to align with ACARA. This means that 80% of the registered families in QLD choose other curriculums, this is not even considering the large number of unregistered families in QLD. These registered families have submitted plans to the HEU and done their due diligence to submit proof of 'reasonable progress', a requirement by the HEU that is not even stipulated by the education act, nor is it a requirement for teachers in the school system.

My concern is that parents are not trained in ACARA. They have chosen curriculum that aligns with their learning outcomes for their children.

Secondly, ACARA is a standardised curriculum. It does not allow for children who are gifted to advance to more complex curriculums. In my personal experience, we followed iMaths, a curriculum that aligns with ACARA. The curriculum wasn't challenging enough for my year 5 son, who is now doing Saxon year 7/6 curriculum. My year 3 son is currently doing year 6 maths using an ACARA aligned curriculum and will soon move to advanced maths using the Saxon curriculum. If this proposal is implemented, how will the department cater for these children who are advanced in their learning? Will they be forced to do a curriculum that is well below their current capabilities? And what about children who have learning difficulties? They will forever be 'behind'.

Thirdly, who will be paying for this curriculum? Many homeschool families are one income households and expecting them to purchase curriculum that aligns with ACARA seems quite coercive and could potentially put families in financial distress.

Lastly, I am concerned that there is no proven research to suggest that ACARA will provide a quality education, as is suggested by the department. Many homeschooled children have entered universities and the workforce without using ACARA, and there is no proof that ACARA will increase their chances of entering University or the workforce.

The requirement for parents to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 states:

"Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children"

I also note this bill appears to be in contravention to the Human Rights Act: Discrimination.

The federal Disability Standards for Education Act 2005 states:

3.4 Reasonable adjustments

(1) For these Standards, an adjustment is reasonable in relation to a student with a disability if it balances the interests of all parties affected.

Note Judgements about what is reasonable for a particular student, or a group of students, with a particular disability may change over time.

(2) In assessing whether a particular adjustment for a student is reasonable, regard should be had to all the relevant circumstances and interests, including the following:

(a) the student's disability;

(b) the views of the student or the student's associate, given under section 3.5;

(c) the effect of the adjustment on the student, including the effect on the student's:

(i) ability to achieve learning outcomes; and

- (ii) ability to participate in courses or programs; and
- (iii) independence;
- (d) the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the education provider, staff and other students;
- (e) the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

Who determines what is in the best interest of a child? The parent? The state? Unless it can be proven that home education is causing grave harm to a student, it would be a great overreach for the department to make such decisions. I am aware that one student recently committed suicide, whilst homeschooling, however, from information that was made available by the media, the department of child safety was involved and didn't act within a reasonable timeframe to prevent the tragic incident. There is no mention or record of how many public school students have committed suicide, suffered bullying, inflicted self-harm or suffered depression whilst in the school system. In fact, I hear weekly of parents removing their children from the school system due to bullying and/or anxiety. In my opinion, there should be an enquiry into this issue in schools, rather than an attempt to pull homeschool parents through a fine-toothed comb.

The best interests of a child should be considered by a parent, not the state. And if a neighbour, GP or other adult has a concern around a child's mental health and well-being, that should be a department of child safety issue, not a department of education issue. It would seem that home-educating parents are being held to a higher standard than parents who send their children to school.

If the department is successful with this proposal, how do they propose to deal with this proposal? They have not specified criteria for 'in the best interests' or specified who will determine this.

The increased compliance burden will drive families underground

Many parents in QLD do not register their children with the HEU. For obvious reasons, there are no concrete figures available, but there are suggestions that between 50% and 80% of the total home educating population are unregistered. However, an increased compliance burden will increase this figure and drive more families underground. This would likely defy the purpose of the act. Again, there is no evidence that suggests that

increasing compliance would a) be in the best interest of the child or b) increase their chances of entering university or successfully entering the workforce.

The submissions process and informing HEU registered families of the proposed changes

The department mentioned in their committee briefing that HEU registered parents were invited to send in submissions via an email announcement in 2022. They stated that they only received 300 submissions. I never received a letter from the HEU, even though I had 2 children registered at the time. Upon enquiring from a number of other homeschool parents, it turns out I wasn't the only one. I'm concerned that due diligence wasn't followed to inform all registered HEU families of these proposed changes.

I also didn't receive the most recent email from the HEU regarding the latest developments. I found out from friends who received a letter, that submissions were due within 2 weeks from the proposed legislation being made public. It would seem that the department hasn't done it's due diligence to consult with homeschooling families. I am concerned that they are basing their information on a group of 20% of registered families who are following ACARA, rather than the 80% who are not.

To conclude, the department hasn't supplied any evidence to prove that following ACARA will be in the best interests of the child or that it would lead to greater prospects of entering university, other higher education or the workforce. The proposed legislation seems like a power-grab and an effort to control currently registered families, rather than an attempt to assist home-educating families in their efforts to provide their children with a quality education.