

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in homeschooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. I am not a homeschooling parent. I have chosen to send my child to an independent school for a variety of personal reasons. However, I know several families personally who have chosen to home-educate their children. The essence of homeschooling, which is a valuable and required alternative to a school-based education, lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with individual needs, interests, skills, abilities, and learning styles. I recognise that the Australian National Curriculum is available to all and a small number of homeschool families draw upon it as suits their own children's learning needs. However, to remove choices for families appears to diminish opportunities to foster diversity and inclusion. I believe that although the Australian curriculum can be a valuable resource of learning for many children - it is not suitable to make it a requirement for all individuals. Some families I know have chosen homeschooling because their children have unique needs that cannot be accommodated for in mainstream schooling. Other families I know have chosen homeschooling because they value the freedom to nurture their children's unique interests and foster their individuality through home education that suits the individual and their family. I personally have chosen an independent school for my child that nurtures their individual needs and supports their growth as a person - focusing on the process and the journey of learning rather than measured outcomes. People learn at different rates and every person has their own unique skills and abilities - that when fostered can allow them to thrive and develop an unshakable confidence in themselves. I believe that it's important to expose children to a variety of skills, subjects and learning points. I think it's also important for parents to have autonomy in working with their children to decide what the next steps in their learning journey should be, rather than forced to follow particular steps that may not actually align with what will help the child thrive in their unique circumstance. When we support our children in nurturing their interests and skills and their own unique learning journey - it builds the skill of willingness. A willingness to learn and remain curious about the world and strengthen their unique skills so they then grow into thriving adults who have built trust in themselves and their abilities. I've personally seen siblings and other young children in my life who have been let down by the school curriculum because they're being forced to work in a particular system that doesn't give them an opportunity to work to their strengths. It can make them feel like a failure and like they are "behind" when in actual fact they have so many unique and spectacular gifts that aren't being nurtured through this set system that doesn't allow flexibility for the individual. As you're probably aware - mental health is such a huge issue in our society - and I think that a big part of this is that from a young age there are so many expectations placed on people to work in a particular way and to meet certain criteria. If they don't meet up to those standards then they're seen as "not good enough" and "a failure", which is just not true. The set curriculum doesn't cater to the person who has different learning needs, skills or interests. How beautiful that there is such a big, nurturing community of parents who are choosing to give their children the attention and unique learning journey that suits their particular needs. I think it's so wonderful to see. I think that the homeschooling community should continue to receive the freedom to work within a more flexible curriculum to support their children and their unique needs. They should continue to receive the support to nurture their children as individuals and create their own KLPs suited to each unique individual. Just because something has been done a certain way for so long - it doesn't mean that it's actually good for our society and the individuals who make up our society and its future. First and foremost, we are humans.

Homeschooling in a way that supports the individual is an opportunity to give a bigger selection of our population a head start on life rather than struggling in a structure that doesn't support their unique needs. My significant concern is that by imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes will force some children back into the school system where they will continue to fall behind, resulting in worsened rather than improved outcomes for children and society as intended. From my perspective, the best interest of children is likely to be served by maintaining real and distinct options for children and families, as well as providing support to families who choose to homeschool that is substantial, considered and informed by the home educating community. In addition, modifying the legislation to address child safety concerns by mandating a standardised curriculum raises significant issues. Such changes will not effectively address safety concerns and would instead result in pushing families of concern off the radar, exacerbating risks. Instead of solely focusing on home education laws, broader reforms to child protection systems are needed. Any proposed changes should be carefully considered to balance educational autonomy with child welfare. Thank you for considering my concerns.