

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 795
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Dear Committee Secretary

I submit the following in relation to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

- I have been a home educating parent since 2021. I'm vaccinated, tertiary educated, and was an essential worker during 2020.
 - My 11yr old son is Autistic (ASD-2 with a demand avoidant profile) but does not have intellectual disability.
 - I am not anti-authoritarian, a member of a cult, or an anarchist.
 - I am pro safety for children with disabilities.
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I DO NOT agree with the changes proposed in the Bill.

1. I don't want the **Australian Curriculum (AC)** to be my son's only choice. Because he cannot follow the AC and remain regulated, safe, engaged, and learning. We tried that already—it failed. And it was not a benign experience. Insisting the AC be used at home is discriminatory and will leave disabled children worse off.

I persisted for six months with the view that a classroom education was the *only* approach to learning. But when my child experienced suicidal ideation, and extreme 'school can't', I had to *expand* my view on education. I discovered that learning happens everywhere and is independent of classrooms and standardised curriculums.

The school insisted the classroom was best for my son—but clearly it wasn't. And it won't ever be, save for radical overhaul. I encourage committee members to familiarise themselves with self-directed learning, co-regulation, and sensory safety. These are pre-requisites for many Autistic learners but remain absent from schools.

I am not an ethics expert. However I cannot support 'forcing' educational experiences on children who won't benefit from them. It risks harm and the revisiting of past trauma. There is no evidenced need for us to follow the AC to ensure a quality education. *Our* lived experience demonstrates the opposite is true.

'School at home' by way of imposing the AC would expose my son to unacceptable risk. Not only would it reduce the quality of his education—it would erode his capacity to learn at all.

2. **Provisional registration** matters to children and families because we *need time*. We need time to process the trauma of our experiences within the school system, in order to make considered decisions about 'next steps'. As you know from data already collected from home educators, most of us won't have chosen home education for our kids as their first option.

I understand too it is only home educators that the proposed legislation intends to pressure with tighter timeframes. Is there anyone on the committee with lived experience of disability

or parenting a child with disability? I don't think a shortened turnaround time for families is fair or just. It will only introduce further disadvantage.

3. I can't report on **academic progress** across all subjects every year because we have a Diverse Learning Needs plan, that is personalised for my son. It is based on *his* interests and capacities which aren't catered for in the AC. It is flexible and unstructured—which is an imperative for his dynamic disability and fluctuating needs.

Also, the degree of reporting the Bill seeks to impose is excessive—for *all* home educators. It far outweighs any expectation placed on teachers within mainstream education. What is the evidence base for this degree of oversight as a necessary condition for 'quality education'? Or is it meant to act as a deterrent to home educate?

4. I object to the guiding principle of **proving that homeschooling is in the best interest of my child** because he has flourished since *leaving* the classroom to learn at home. He is proof that the voices of disabled people (no matter how young) need to be privileged—not voices that bring little to the table except insistence on 'school attendance' or 'school at home'.

My money is on the kids every time.

I am my son's 'safe' person. I am in the strongest position to hear him—and to determine what is in his best interest. When I don't have the answers, I seek out qualified, *unbiased* professionals and lived experience support.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 states, 'Everyone has the right to education'. I agree. For my son that looks like home education in its current form. Not home education as proposed by this Bill i.e. punitive, oppressive, and prescriptive.

Article 26 also states, 'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children'. I do not choose the AC—because we trialled it and its inaccessibility proved harmful.

Our state education system funnels children into classrooms to receive the AC. And while this works for many learners, children like my son are better off with a different model—at home, engaging in individualised learning experiences.

This is also what quality looks like.

I hope you will come to value (and not restrict) the bespoke learning and innovative contribution made by us and our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit. I appreciate any time taken to better understand home education and the diverse learning needs of children in Queensland.

Regards, Joleen Olsson