

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 797  
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## **Introduction**

As a parent who home educates five of my children and have watched them overall do significantly better academically, mentally, and emotionally than when they were at school. I do not support most of the changes being proposed regarding home education. I also wish it noted that although the statement was made by the minister that consultation occurred, I was never consulted or even made aware of consultation being carried out. Furthermore, although the claim is made that the bill provides amendments that respond to stakeholder feedback, that claim needs to be transparent and the original stakeholder feedback made accessible (a claim does not evidence make).

The proposed changes to home education regulations have ignited significant frustration and offense among parents who have opted for home educating. These changes, while purportedly aimed at improving educational standards and safeguarding child welfare, have inadvertently stirred feelings of indignation and resentment. As I will outline, this is not without reason as these changes have significant consequences that strike at the heart of family and parental autonomy and rights.

## **Prescribing The Curriculum**

Firstly, prescribing the Australian Curriculum or similar standards for home education programs completely overlooks the diverse needs and preferences of individual families. Although the proposed changes may seek to strengthen the child's right to quality education which is certainly in accordance with article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) it does undermine the prior right of the parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given their children (UDSR, 26.3). Many parents opt for home education precisely because they believe traditional schooling systems and curriculums have failed to adequately cater to their child's needs or values. By mandating adherence to a standardised curriculum, the government risks undermining the flexibility and adaptability that makes home education an attractive (and successful) option for these families.

Parents who have chosen home education often do so after careful consideration and with unwavering dedication to their children's academic and personal development. However, the increased emphasis on regulatory oversight and rigid adherence to standardised curricula appears to undermine this commitment. It implies a fundamental lack of trust in parents' ability

to effectively educate their own children, striking at the core of their parental autonomy and competency.

### **Provisional Registration**

The removal of the provisional registration period only exacerbates these feelings of marginalisation and alienation. It suggests a dismissive attitude towards the valid concerns and unique circumstances of homeschooling families, leaving them feeling undervalued and unsupported by the very institutions that should be advocating for their educational choices.

Furthermore, the proposal to remove the provisional registration period and require a full educational program at the time of registration presents challenges for families in distressing situations. Removing the provisional registration period eliminates a crucial buffer period for families to navigate the transition from traditional schooling to home education, particularly in cases of urgent need. Requiring a full educational program at the time of registration adds further pressure on already stressed parents and children, potentially sacrificing the thoughtful planning and consideration necessary to tailor the education to the child's individual needs and circumstances.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Strengthening reporting requirements and internal review processes will also impose undue burdens on home-educating parents, detracting from the personalised and child-centred approach that characterises many home education programs. While accountability is essential, overly stringent regulations may discourage families from choosing home education altogether or force them into educational models that do not deliver for the needs of the child or align with their values or beliefs.

Institutional and educational reform efforts to enhance the schooling system's quality and safety would address the concerns of some parents. This could potentially lead them to reconsider returning their child to the traditional schooling system. Such a proactive approach is far preferable to employing draconian methods that undermine parental rights.

### **“The best interest of the child”**

The introduction of a guiding principle centred around the child's best interests is not only patronising but also deeply insulting to parents who have meticulously crafted their home education approach with their child's welfare at the forefront. It insinuates a lack of concern or understanding on the part of policymakers, fuelling a sense of outrage and defiance among home-educating parents. Whilst it is understood that there are situations that are not ideal and require further oversight, the majority of parents take this responsibility seriously. By legislating this as a guiding principle it removes the right of parents to decide on the best interest of their child and gives this judgement to the state. This represents a draconian overreach and violation of Article 26.3 (UDHR)

## **Conclusion**

While the proposed changes aim to streamline the registration process and ensure educational quality, they risk exacerbating stress and barriers for families seeking to transition to home education, particularly in cases of urgent need. It's essential for policymakers to carefully consider the practical realities and emotional complexities families face during such transitions and ensure that regulations allow for flexibility and support during these critical periods. With just over 10,000 students now registered for home education in Queensland it is now more important than ever to carefully consider the unintended consequences, such as those outlined in this submission.

While the intent behind the proposed changes is laudable, prior to implementation, caution must be taken strike a balance between ensuring educational quality and respecting parental rights, autonomy, and the practical and emotional needs of families in all situations, especially so when distressing factors for the children concerned must be taken into consideration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

John Shay (BCW, MTheo, GradDipMngt)