

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

To Whom It May Concern, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed changes in homeschool legislation as a homeschool parent and as a professional social work lecturer. It is my sincere belief that: diversity in homeschooling curriculum and the ability to tailor programs to the individual child and family is the core strength of homeschooling. the ability to homeschool with your own curriculum has enabled many children who would have otherwise fallen through the cracks and failed or dropped out of school, to become well-educated and continue on as contributing members of society the underlying reasons for families to homeschool in the last few years most often involve disability, special needs, and/ the inability of the school system to cope with the increasing educational, and emotional demands of children in the post-covid space. Children and families exiting the system with emotional problems or special needs, will not be able to comply with the demands of a national curriculum. Schools are not currently equipped with the resources to keep children safe. If we want to reform policies to make homeschooling less appealing for parents who are already unsafe, and cannot provide a safe environment, we need more proactive measures, just as we do in any safety system; looking at external supports, providing funding for classes/ half days/ sports events/ camps etc with larger homeschooling groups, schools or educational organisations, to work to reduce the incidence of children being isolated. It is important that these positive and proactive measures be put in to place, rather than putting in punitive measures that could (and will) push families like this in to further isolation. It is also important to understand that post-covid, many family structures have changed and people who are currently homeschooling or planning to homeschool could greatly benefit from a third option of part-time schooling with reduced hours, smaller schools and 1 - 3 in-class days per week, which would do more to prevent child abuse than any hardline approaches to create uniform curriculum. We know that in cases of child abuse in general, protective factors always include the child having regular contact with adults external to their care-giver. Existing, loving and caring homeschooling families would welcome the opportunity and assistance to engage in classes and/or workshops for their children (and most already do this) and funding that would usually be funnelled in to school for one child could be well used to provide school-like classes and experiences for homeschool families, with the benefit of a better education for children and a much better teacher to student ratio at home.

On a personal note. I myself experienced severe trauma in high school and like most, was exposed to many things, including sexual harassment, drug use and other illegal activities, in high school. I left school to homeschool for a period of time without a set curriculum, and without a parent at home full time, and went on to enter university, graduate top of my school and to lecture at university. Homeschooling gave me the opportunity to learn at my own pace and to develop a love of learning that led me to my career path. I also homeschooled children who are now adults. One has level 2 autism which was undiagnosed in school. When our child was diagnosed as an adult, the psychologist stated that homeschooling had been the major factor in preventing our child from the majority of the emotional trauma and mental health issues that would be expected, as her homeschool environment was always flexible and her curriculum changed to suit what she needed. She went on to be invited to attend a Conservatorium of Music at university and was also accepted in to a Bachelor of Criminology. Our second homeschooled child followed a completely different homeschool curriculum as he learned completely differently and we were able to tailor his learning to him. He is currently in the middle of an electrical apprenticeship. Homeschooling with a flexible curriculum has ensured their success. It is worth noting that as a university educator, I work in a

field of education that values autonomy. Increasingly, our students are studying externally or in mixed-mode both online and offline. The students who succeed are those that are given tools both online and at home, who are given equal opportunities and who are given freedom to choose what they love and what they want to specialise in. This is very much how home education works and why it is successful. Any changes made, should focus on how to better support families by facilitating a diversified educational landscape as our society moves forward in to a more complex world.