

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the committee currently considering the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

Our concerns about the Bill relate to (a) the requirement for all home educated students to follow the Australian Curriculum and (b) removing the 60 day allowance for Provisional Registration.

I would like to start by providing some background information about our family, so you have some context when considering my submission.

- My husband and I are both tertiary educated, professional people. We have two teenagers (14yo and 15yo) who attended kindergarten and have been educated at home ever since. It's fair to say no-one knows our children's learning styles, educational interests, personalities, future aspirations, or strengths as well as the two of us!
- As a family, we have always been active volunteers in our local community be it via Parkrun, karate, Girl Guides or our local Surf Life Saving Club, where we are all heavily involved in both the Nippers and Youth Development Programs, as well as being Patrolling lifesavers.
- Like all other parents we know - whether they have chosen to home educate, school via distance education or enter the public/private/independent schooling system – we have always been driven by a desire to provide our children with the best possible start to life, not only in terms of their education but also by ensuring they are growing into “good humans” who are equipped with a useful set of life skills.
- For us, that has meant constantly seeking out rich learning opportunities for them and tailoring a high-quality education (which is relevant, contemporary and strengths based) to their interests. Over the years they have competed in a number of global STEM competitions, they have been part of a literature study group many times, they have attended learning co-ops, language classes, science workshops, sports days and the list goes on.
- As they have grown older and begun considering their future pathways, we have supported them in achieving their goals and encouraged them as they have set new ones for themselves to reflect their advancements or changing focus.
- Both our children have always been motivated learners, they have never had information “dumbed down” for them or been restricted according to their prescribed year level, they have become increasingly self-directed over time, and they have a curiosity about the world around them which is truly admirable!

So how, and why, is the above information relevant to the amendment being proposed and why are we concerned? Fortunately for us, we have not had to navigate disability within the education sector, nor remove our children from mainstream schooling due to a bad experience. So, our concern about the

Amendment is not centred around either of those issues (like they are for many other home educating families). For our family it is simply a matter of choice, and we feel strongly that the proposed changes will restrict the choices we are able to make about our children's education.

At reporting time, we have **never** been asked (by the Home Education Unit) to provide any additional evidence of the high-quality education we have provided to our children, despite the fact we have **not** aligned their education to the Australian Curriculum, and they have **not** worked at a particular year level. Our work samples, photos and 'yearly snap shots' have always been adequate in demonstrating immersion in areas of interest, recognition of skills/activities which are still to be achieved and why their age is of no particular relevance/consequence in assessment.

To date, we have been fortunate to have the flexibility to choose how we provide a high-quality education for our children, and our children have always thrived. It has taken a lot of time and energy to research and facilitate our children's learning opportunities however, like many other home educating families, we have sourced curriculum and learning tools from all over the world, depending on what has suited our children's interests and learning requirements at the time. The home education community is very resourceful, and also very generous, meaning parents are constantly seeking input from, and sharing learning ideas with, each other and there is tremendous opportunity to engage with a dynamic, global community that promotes creativity and innovative learning.

In our opinion, requiring all home educated students to follow the Australian Curriculum is to impose unnecessary restrictions on **what** they learn and **how**, and **at what age**, they learn it. Entry into higher education is no longer dependant on completion of a particular curriculum - as more and more pathways to employment and further study are opening up - so it would seem unnecessary (at best) to stipulate all children must follow an arbitrary educational program for a certain number of years. We need innovative, creative learners who are passionate and engaged in their particular areas of interest, not learners who are 'bogged down' by subject areas, or learning tools, they are disengaged from. We should be supporting our children to learn on a global stage, not discouraging them from enrolling in courses/training which might be outside a prescribed curriculum. We are not debating the need for all children to receive a high-quality education – that is a given. We are simply debating the need for what constitutes 'high-quality' to be defined by an Act of Parliament.

With regards to the removal of the 60 day allowance for Provisional Registration, our concerns relate to the pressure this puts on new home educators who, in my experience, are usually feeling overwhelmed and stressed by an (often unexpected) foray into home education. As stated above, it takes time, research and a significant amount of planning to formulate an educational program for a home educated child, this cannot be done in a day or two. We are required to submit a new one every year, for continuing registration, and we have no problem in doing so. It is our opportunity to reflect on the previous 12 months, set goals for the upcoming year and

source curriculum, courses and learning tools which will be utilised. However, for a parent entering the system unplanned (potentially because their child is not coping at school, and/or their mental health is being compromised), there is a lot to read and understand about the legal requirements around home education. It is our belief that removing the 60 day allowance - for parents to submit a well thought out educational program for full registration - is not in the best interests of either the child or their parent and could, in fact, be detrimental to both parties.

Thank you for considering my submission. I hope this has provided some context for our opposition to the proposed changes and that you are able to consider issues, from our point of view, which you may not have been previously aware of.