

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 860
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Submitter Comments:

Dear committee members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed overregulation of home education practices. As a home educator deeply invested in my children's education, I urge the committee to reconsider these measures, which threaten to undermine the autonomy and effectiveness of home education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 29 states that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, point 3 states that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Forcing the Australian Curriculum to be taught at home will contravene both these Articles. Who under the proposed legislation will be deeming the type of education that is in the 'best interests' of the child? Who knows their child and wants what is best for them better than their own parent?

Homeschooling families do not seek to replicate the traditional school system at home, but rather provide opportunities for personalised, holistic education that aligns with our children's unique needs, interests, and learning styles. This approach nurtures a love of learning, encourages critical thinking, and encourages individual talents and passions – just as intended by the United Nations. My children have the time each day to pursue their talents to their fullest potential; my son for example can play piano beautifully, spends hours outside in nature each day, and has the time and luxury to deep dive into science and maths concepts far beyond the 'level' that ACARA would consider appropriate. He is a 10-year-old learning maths concepts that I used to teach Year 9 students in high school. At the same time, I provide extra support in areas that he now has very negative associations with from his experience in Queensland public school.

The Australian Curriculum skims the surface of numerous subjects with no real depth or integration; this is not how real-world learning occurs. It was designed for use with classrooms full of students – not for a home setting with children of different ages or a single student. Currently, having the autonomy to tailor my children's learning goals and resources allows my 10 and 3-year-old to learn together and apart as appropriate. The imposition of rigid regulations and standardised requirements would only serve to stifle the flexibility and creativity that are the hallmarks of home education. I reject the notion that one-size-fits-all mandates can adequately address the diverse needs of homeschooling families and their children.

In conclusion, I appeal to the committee to listen to the countless voices of home educating families and to respect our autonomy in crafting educational experiences that best serve our children, their personalities, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Westhoven

Former Experienced Senior Teacher – High School Biology/Psychology, current home educating parent and advocate.