

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 870
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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed changes to education legislation in Queensland. My family and I reside in Southeast Queensland and are highly engaged in our beautiful community. My husband and I home educate our children, and I am a practicing Registered Nurse at our local hospital. I strongly believe that every child deserves access to a high-quality education and opportunities.

The decision to home-educate is not one made lightly. Deep consideration is taken in relation to how children learn as individuals and what they require to succeed on their education journey. Furthermore, hours of time go into researching, meeting home school families, and exploring resources to compose a flexible and dynamic home education plan specific to each child. Home schooled children have the luxury of having a plethora of learning opportunities, environments, resources and endless moments that allow for creativity. I know firsthand how incredible the home education community is, and that home educated children are not only learning but thriving. The outdated stereotype that presumes children who are not within a traditional school system will lack education, opportunities or social skills must end. A diverse and large population (10, 000 plus families) have decided that home education is in their child's best interest. Many of these families are professionals with higher degrees, business owners and an extraordinary number of practicing and non-practicing teachers.

All families will be negatively impacted if a set curriculum is imposed on home education. After stepping away from a rigid, standardised, and outdated system, it saddens me to imagine that this could be re-created within the home school setting. Precious and valuable time that is used to deeply immerse children in educational rich learning will be redirected to tick boxes within a predetermined criterion. This is not congruent with the best interest of children, who have the right to be recognised as individuals; each who has their own interests, learning styles and abilities.

Retracting the provisional registration period may be detrimental to children's health and wellbeing and it does not support parent's rights to home educate. Additional stress and pressure will be placed on parents and formulate a detailed education plan prior to removing their child from the school setting. This is particularly concerning if the school setting is responsible for causing psychological, emotional or physical harm to a child. In my personal experience the provisional period allowed me to gain a better understanding of my child's learning needs, learning styles and abilities prior to developing a learning plan. In turn, I was able to produce a high-quality education plan based on information and observations I made during this period.

I believe that there was a lack of transparency and inadequate consultation with current Queensland homeschooling families, children and communities prior to the legislation being proposed. Overall, I feel the home school community has been grossly misrepresented. Questions need to be asked about why so many families have decided that the current school system does not align with the best interests of their children? Research and enquiry into the mental health and safety of children and young adults within the school system is imperative.

Lastly, autonomy is a fundamental human right; within an educational and parental context the proposed legislation ignores this.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my concerns and I look forward to your response on this important issue.

Nicole Murray