

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 891
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Dear Committee Members,

SUBMISSION OF OBJECTION AND COMMENDMENT TO THE
EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024
PRESENTED TO QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT BY HON. DI FARMER MP ON 6 MARCH 2024

I refer to the above Amendment Bill and wish to formally submit my objection to certain amendments being proposed for the sections relating to Home Education, with commendation towards two proposed amendments relating to Home Education.

I beseech your detailed consideration of the amendments, with respect to mine and all other submissions presented, as part of your decision making process.

Following this cover letter are my reasons and concerns for objection.

Sincerely,



Tammy Tiraboschi



Objection to the proposed Bill amendments intended for Home Education 2024

Both my husband and I are Bachelor qualified Education Teachers. After approx 20 years of service, we both had resigned from the State Education system prior to having our family (circa 2010) due to our principles on education being thwarted by the system, as well as preferring to return to farming for a means of employment (self-employed) as part of our principles on raising a family outside of the current educational status quo and rigors of mainstream schooling pressures weighted on children from an extremely young age, and pressures heavily weighted on education institution staff (Teachers, Principals etc).

Once our first child was of school age, we fervently and without a blink of an eye, choose to Homeschool. Now 8 years down the track, we are continually pleased we made this decision – a parental decision, an educated decision. Currently, both our children are thriving (not simply surviving) through their years of life-long learning / education. We know we are providing a robust, high-quality education for them. On occasion we have referred to the Australian Curriculum and ACARA but not because we HAVE to, and we certainly do not follow the curriculum verbatim, instead we draw from a plethora of high-quality educational resources to assist us in our Home Education programming.

We vehemently disagree with the notion that a quality education is defined solely by adherence to the Australian Curriculum. The proposed changes to Home Education regulations, particularly the requirement to follow the Australian Curriculum in the senior years, would undermine parental choice and autonomy in education. Without a doubt it would impose unnecessary restrictions on families who have chosen to Homeschool and limit their ability to provide a personalized and effective education for their children. We are also concerned that the recommendation for only senior years is not clearly stipulated and may eventually transition to ALL year levels being mandated to follow the Australian Curriculum.

We object to:

- Mandating adherence to the Australian Curriculum for Senior Years

This would hinder our ability to provide a personalized and effective education for our children. In our experience, we and other homeschooling parents are deeply passionate and invested in our children's well-being and education. Each family seeks the “best-fit” programming to suit their children’s needs, taking from both national and international curriculums if so desired. Furthermore, the Australian Curriculum is an incredibly complex document that has been tailored to educate children in school settings and delivered by numerous teachers, including specialist teachers. Additionally, schools employ curriculum specialists to interpret and assist in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Home Educators do not have access to this level of expertise, nor specialist staff.

In a small, family setting, adhering to the Australian Curriculum only, would not constitute a high-quality education.

- Reducing or Removing Provisional Registration

I am concerned this may impede families needing to move from a schooling system into Home Education as relevant Laws could be imposed upon them for not meeting educational Attendance requirements, whilst they develop a year's program in a shorter timeframe.

It would equally limit those choosing to commence Home Education from the very beginning of their child's "life-long learning" / education journey as they need time to plan, refine their planning and possibly be supported via the Home Education Unit in their provision of high-quality educational programming.

I believe the impact for the Home Education Unit would be vastly different too, given the shorter time frame with which to approve Registrations, safeguarding a high level of scrutiny to ensure high-quality programs are being approved and not simply rushing registrations through in order to meet a shorter timeframe.

- Increasing the Reporting Expectations

This amendment would mean parents are expected to do more reporting than even individual teachers do. Keeping in mind, all levels of education have specialist teachers to report on extra-curricular subjects (music, physical education, LoTE etc) and at times specific core subjects, especially by secondary schooling.

This amendment would place excessive stress on a thriving educational approach ie. Home Education, by way of onerous reporting for one, let alone multiple children. The current method of reporting on core subjects (Literacy, Numeracy plus one other subject – interchanging each year) seems more than adequate.

As well, I believe the Home Education Unit in its current arrangement would certainly be unable to cope with the enormity of such reporting requirements and meet its obligations to review annual Reports within a 2 month time frame in order for families to maintain their Registered status.

Furthermore, how will this amendment truly look? How can a statement like this be implemented into the Act without a guiding framework that can be discussed and publicly consulted upon by Queensland constituents.

In conclusion:

I urge you to reconsider implementing the proposed changes within the Bill amendments to Home Education – as the adage goes, "If it (*Home Education*) ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Rather than imposing the amendments mentioned, I urge you to take a closer look at why so many more families have chosen to become Home Educators as their preferred method of education and living. A choice that is quite significant for families (in particular sole-parents) given that in order to best educate our children we often have to take a reduction in wages / superannuation contributions, and or leave thriving careers because of our dedication to do better than what is currently on offer within the Queensland Education system. Note here, there are no government family support options / payments for general Home Educating families, only for those with disabilities or living in extreme remote area localities.

Instead support the individualized education that Home Education provides. Let us continue to tailor our children's education at a high-quality, to meet their unique needs, interests, and abilities via a plethora of options and not just the Australian Curriculum.

I call upon the Committee to champion educational innovation and reform that empowers students to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world. By embracing flexibility, relevance, and student-centered learning approaches, we (Home Education and the Education Department) can continue to create a more inclusive and responsive system of educating children in a variety of ways and methods that prepares all children for lifelong success and fulfillment, and delivers a future population with varied approaches to the potential throes of the world in which we exist and not just governed by one version of educational content, process and application ie. the Australian Curriculum.

Finally, please note that I do agree that the bill extends the age eligibility by one year to enable a child to be registered for Home Education until 31 December in the year the child turns 18, consistent with the schooling sector.

As well, I thoroughly agree that the rights of a child are protected. I agree with the new guiding principle setting out that Home Education should be provided in a way that is in the best interests of the child or young person, taking into account their safety and wellbeing, and ensuring the child or young person has access to a high-quality education.

Thank you for reviewing my concerns. I look forward to your response and to further dialogue on this important issue.

Sincerely,


Tammy Tiraboschi


Endnote

If conducting a direct review of the Queensland Education System/Act, I invite you to read:

“Copycats, Stickybeaks and Scallywags, Our Children All” by Bruce L Jones. Renowned by fellow educators, the Education Department and his peers, Bruce is an outstanding educator who has had a long career in the Queensland Department of Education. He is extensively experienced and superbly equipped to reflect upon the inadequacies and failings of the Education system, as well as having the aptitude to recommend and propose real-life, achievable changes within the system now. His book is a “must read”.

And, if the Queensland Government was to implement the proposed Bill amendments, then I feel it should also be conscious that:

- Mandated Australian Curriculum might well need:

- . Training for Home Educators in how to access and implement the curriculum efficiently
- . Additional funding for families to attend professional development in order to meet the State's requirements on planning and reporting via the curriculum
- . Additional support staff (through HEU) on-call for families to reach out to when they are unsure of the curriculum content, processes, reports etc

- Reducing or Removing Provisional Registration will need:

- . Funding and Staffing for the HEU (Home Education Unit) to cope with the reduced timeframe to effectively Register families into Home Education
- . Change of Laws to ensure parents removing their children from mainstream schooling (especially in the case of trauma or immediate threats) so they are not reprimanded for an "apparent" lapse in their child's attendance

- Increasing the Reporting Expectations might well need:

- . Additional funding, staffing and access for Home Educating families to the HEU, in order to accomplish the enormity of workload that this amendment will bring about
- . Ideally some form of parental payment to support Home Educators as a supplement to their income loss due to the additional time required to meet planning and reporting expectations, or attend professional development to meet these additional requirements