

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

All personal information after my name must be withdrawn for privacy and safety reasons.

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Overview of concerns about the changes proposed to home education:

I believe my children have the right to a high-quality education, **free from the torture and bullying** that they have experienced at the hands of the State School System. They currently enjoy learning from home and want to continue doing so.

I have five main concerns about the proposed bill, which is drawn from my experience as a home educator for over four years and parent of three children. (One whom, at the age of 24, now receives psychiatric counselling to overcome the abuse he received at his State High School). These five concerns are listed below and explained in the body of this document:

1. The **requirement for parents to prove** that home education is in the best interest of the child.
 - a) **Homeschooling is a given right in all other states of Australia.**
 - b) **The best interest of each child is a safe and secure environment. OUR CHILDREN DID NOT RECEIVE THIS AT SCHOOL.**
2. **The requirement for 14 days** appears **erroneous** and needs to be adjusted back to **the original 28 days**, see body of submission for basic logical reasoning. (With regard to the proposed change: 'Clause 63, Section 211(1), '28 days'—omit, insert— 14 days.)
3. Maybe this was an **oversight**, but **university** seems to have been removed from the list of approved activities a child may be allowed to undertake. (With regard to proposed change: Clause 68, **Section 217** – insert – (3) In this section—approved education and training program means etc...). This would result in a lower level of education due to the proposed changes.
4. I do not want to have the **certificate of registration removed** from the system. I do want to have the '**Letter of Registration**' renamed as a '**notice**'.
5. With regard to: Clause 68 - Section 217(1)(b)— **The requirement to increase annotations and samples from the current three subjects to all eight, will more than double the workload of the HEU and home educators. This will cost the HEU time and money.**

These concerns are all addressed below in greater detail:

1. The requirement for parents to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child.
 - a. **Homeschooling is a given right in all other states of Australia.** I believe it my right to choose the education that best fits my child. I am able to home educate my child in many areas. I have achieved a very high standard at university in subjects covering advanced mathematics, qualitative and quantitative statistical data analysis, economics, business, management, and biology. I achieved good marks in High School, covering advanced math, chemistry, biology and physics. I am still able to recall information from primary school when I need it. I aim to help make learning at home not only educational but exciting. **What I do not know, I make it my business to find out.** My son (at homeschool social gatherings) now demonstrates 'fun (safe) experiments' to smaller children. This consolidates his learning and grabs the imagination of a whole new generation of younger children.
 - b. **The best interest of each child is a safe and secure environment.** An environment free from **bullies**, and where my daughter has someone near her at all times for emergency care for her **allergies** and to notice her **quiet asthma**.
 - i. **My eldest son is broken**, the State High School broke him. He now requires a psychologist to help deal with overcoming the abuse he received by a pack of teenager boys who descended upon him, on an oval in the full light of day, with teachers too scared to interfere. Pushing his face into the dirt and did unspeakable things to him with a stick. **HOW CAN YOU CONSIDER THIS SAFE.** The teachers never reported the incident. My son was too scared to speak up, only managing to tell us how "relieved he was that we'd chosen to homeschool" our other children. He is now an adult and having to receive treatment because of a broken school system.
 - ii. **I pulled my youngest son from primary school as he was being bullied.** He had been **choked, held down, stabbed with pins and deprived of water.** He started to have **anxiety** in relation to attending school, he was **petrified**. We had put strategies in place to avoid the bullies, but by Year 3 they were smarter and terrorised my son every chance they got. I was asked not to write my complaints in a letter format, because this made too much paperwork for staff. I realised later that was so they could sweep the incidents under the rug. **He was NOT SAFE AT SCHOOL.**

- iii. My **daughter** has the **right to a safe and secure environment** that she receives at home. She has **allergies** and '**quiet asthma**'. At home she receives constant supervision to ensure she is not having an attack. I listen for her, I watch her, and I administer the medicine she requires when she needs it. Teachers have not noticed my daughter having a **quiet asthma attack** in the past. Finally, my daughter is quiet, what a relief for their ears. Unfortunately, this meant she was **not getting enough oxygen to her brain**. Not being 'the good student' they thought. When this happened at school, we were **lucky** that it happened a few minutes to 'pick up time'. I arrived to find her having an attack. I administered medicine immediately. No medical assistance had been offered by the teachers in charge because they had not noticed. My daughters brain goes past the point of rationality. **She can not give herself the medicine she needs in that state.**
- iv. In a separate incident: two 'Year 6's' who in the 'school buddies' program were told she had **grass allergies**, so they thought it was a good idea to test which grass she was allergic to by waving grasses underneath her nose when she was in Prep. **She was not safe at school, and I am not happy about it.**

I want a safe environment for my children. It is erroneous to require we have **to prove it**. I can see the government is repeating the same mistake that they made years ago for First Nations people. Taking children from their family and forcing them to attend an institution. "The best Interest for the children" should never be decided and forced by government.

SUGGESTION: Possibly the intention of best interest for the child was to serve the well being of the child, in addition to their academic performance. If so, then this need could be met by asking parents to visit a GP once a year at least 4 months prior to registration, one month before reporting. So, when the tick box at the front is ticked, the HEU knows that the child has been seen by a doctor at least once in a year. (This tick box system is a statutory declaration and is therefore legally binding, with the onus on the parent.)

Families choose home education not because they want to, but largely because they feel they have no other choices (English, 2021a; 2021b; 2022).

2. **The proposed change: 'Clause 63, Section 211(1), '28 days'—omit, insert—14 days.** The requirement for **14 days** in the aforementioned section is **erroneous** and needs to be **adjusted back to at least 28 days**. There are two main reasons for this.

a) **Firstly**, the obvious reason being is that it takes 20 days for the snail mail to get to the home educator and back again (10 days each way is what Australia Post currently suggests). **Assuming everyone has email is erroneous**. The additional days may allow home educators eight days, in which to find the 'spare time' to search for extra paperwork (hoping that the children have not accidentally misplaced samples). Each annotation for each sample can take up to at least three afternoons to scan and comment on (6 days per subject). More time should be allowed not less.

b) **Secondly**, the reduction in the show cause response time to 14 days. This is hard as families that get these **need MORE time** to learn how to provide appropriate responses and no help or training is provided beyond volunteers in the community. Often, we pose questions (to clarify what bit of documentation did not scan correctly or is missing).and wait on emails from an already overworked HEU.

3. Perhaps this was an oversight, but **university** seems to have been removed from the list of approved activities a child may be allowed to undertake. (With regard to proposed change: Clause 68, **Section 217** – insert – (3) In this section—approved education and training program means etc...).

I intended to provide my child with a high level of education, supplementing with a subject at TAFE or UNIVERSITY. **He loves coding** and has progressed faster than expected. He may be ready to do this next year (13 years old) or the following year. Many other students already include a university subject in their plan. **WHY SHOULD THEY ALL MISS OUT.** The result of this bill, would provide no official option to include a university subject. **Thus, this proposed bill would lower the quality of education my children would receive.**

4. With regard to: Section 214 (1) Clause 65

Section 214(1), from 'issue'— *omit, insert*— give the applicant a notice stating the following information, etc.)

Removing the certificate is unnecessary. I do not wish to have the 'Letter of Registration' renamed as a 'notice'. Although we unexpectedly receive the certificate, (now just an email), it was one of the highlights of becoming a homeschooling parent. It holds within it an unspoken agreement, to give my children the high level of education they deserve. It is life affirming to be validated for undertaking such an important task. The letter of registration states exactly what we are, registered.

5. With regard to: Clause 68 - The requirement to increase annotations and samples from the current three subjects to all eight, will more than double the workload of the HEU and home educators. This will cost the HEU time and money.

Section 217(1)(b)— *omit, insert*—

(b) the educational program used for the child's home education must—

(i) be suitable for the child having regard to the child's age, ability, aptitude and development; and

(ii) be consistent with an approved education and training program; and

(iii) provide the child with a comprehensive course of study in a diverse range of subjects or learning areas; and (iv) include subjects or learning areas that are the study of English and mathematics.

(ba) a parent of the child must give the chief executive a written report—

(i) for the period the child is registered for home education; and

(ii) in relation to each subject or learning area that is part of the educational program used for the child's home education.

This will cost the HEU time and money. It seemed as though HEU could do with less paperwork, not more. When we call HEU they say they are swamped. In detail, adding extra requests for an extra two samples of each subject means extra annotations will need to go with each sample. Now, instead of six samples accompanied by annotations, they will have to peruse 16 annotations and samples. Requiring **more staff** and **more money** from the budget. **Has this additional funding been approved?**

- a. The computer system both on email and the HEU submission, tends to become overloaded at reporting time. Increasing the number of samples and subsequent annotations will **require at least a doubling of space** in the **computer systems**. It currently cannot take the strain. Has the **funding** for increasing the capacity of email storage and submission storage been **budgeted for?**

I often find myself working on homeschool reports up to 6pm and 11pm (especially if one of my children is having a difficult day). My children deserve the right to have a parent help them when they need it with

education and life. Not have a parent busy just doing extra 'paperwork' so departments can tick a box.

Concluding statement

Home education **has been working really well for us**. It is 3.30pm on a Friday afternoon (as I type this) and **my daughter has asked if she can work on her English story**. She is typing, creating and editing as she goes. She is nine and is choosing to do this, writing **has become an interest** for her. No-one is pushing it down her throat, instead **she 'wants to learn'**. Please let her. **My son is typing code for a website he is planning**. He did his base subjects at 7am, before he left to join other home educated friends for HPE at our local pool. My children have **become self motivated learners** and are able to **quest for knowledge at their own pace**.

If the schools (involved in the incidents listed in my first point) **had acted in the best interest and wellbeing of each child** at the time, and maintained **their safety**, then I would not have needed to home educate. I am keeping them safe at home. They receive a high-quality education. We already provide reports and samples as required. We use the Australian Curriculum as a guide. However, we **do not wish to be forced** to do so. I am **acting in their best interest**, and I am **appalled at being asked to 'prove' it, especially when the mainstream school system has grossly failed my children**. As noted above, if schools were actually safe, parents would keep their children and young people enrolled in them. Parent educators **want the best outcomes for their children**.

I hope you will use your powers to amend the proposed bill as required.