

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee members,

I am writing this letter, due to deep concern in regarding the proposed amendments to the education bill that has been presented to parliament.

I would like to share with you our family's story

Our kids attended school up to grade 5 and 6. My son, the eldest, had already had some "hiccups" at school with his reading and writing abilities. My daughter, had been going well, except for the year in a composite class when she learnt nothing due to the teacher been overwhelmed with responsibilities and not giving the small younger class much time.

Due to circumstances we had to change schools, and we enrolled into another private school. Here, my son was put into an ESL class due to his "poor" reading skills. We had discussed this with his teacher and she assured us that he would get some reading help with his mathematics – those terrible word problems – and wouldn't be penalized while they worked on improving his reading.

Unfortunately, this wasn't to be and I could see his confidence been eroded due to his low marks and the constant attention to his current inabilities to "keep up" with the expected level for his age. We could also see as time went on, that he would not be included in many school activities due to his lack of ability reading.

After much thought and prayer we decided to remove him from school. I did heaps of research into how kids learn and ways to teach in a child friendly way and continued to educate myself throughout the homeschool years.

It made no sense to have one child in school while another was at home so our daughter came home too. By the end of the first year of homeschooling, my son was reading fluently and he was able to write compositions. This was because the curriculum, which I put together myself, was made just for him and there was no pressure to reach a certain goal by a certain time. Working with him rather than teaching AT him made a world of difference. Focusing on things that he found interesting helped him learn to express himself on paper, while releasing the pressure of learning how to read seemed to open his ability to grasp the concepts.

Seeing the results home schooling had with both our children that year encouraged us to continue as it was the right way for us. My son continued on and started an apprenticeship with our family business for a number of years till we sold the business and moved one and a half hours out of Brisbane to the country. After much soul searching, he decided he wanted to do computer animation at university. This would require a six hour round trip travelling to and from school. Also, a lot would have to be completed in his own time online. After completing a year in TAFE, he got accepted to QUT and is now in the final year of his degree.

Due to home schooling, our daughter was able to pursue her love of reading and writing to a greater degree than she would have been able to at school. Mathematics and science not been her strong point, we were able to maintain an average level in these subjects while focusing on her strengths. After a foray into clothes designing, she completed a diploma of library and information services at TAFE. She is now living in Brisbane and working in a library supply company- working with books which she loves. She is also investigating publishing her first fiction novel.

I'm concerned about this new legislation as I can see where it would have impacted our homeschooling experience and therefore NOT provided such a good outcome for my family.

One of the main reasons we chose to homeschool was to get away from the Australian Curriculum as it wasn't working for my kids. The ability to stop focusing on age related markers and work at the child's speed in different subjects made a massive difference to the ability to learn.

All people should have the choice to homeschool – not impacted by the ability of the parents to be able to fulfil massive amounts of paperwork. Homeschooling is not about creating reports. This will negatively impact the way children are educated.

Homeschooled children are different from those in the typical education system, they are unique and this is something that employers value and look for in their employees. Don't stifle brilliance and entrepreneurship with regulations.

Homeschooling enables children to be themselves and move towards goals at their own pace. It improves their self-esteem and self-worth. This prepares them to be a valuable part of our community.

This is just some of the reasons why I believe in the ability for parents to have the freedom to educate their own children in a way which they know is best.

Sincerely,

Sandra Lawson

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