

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1102
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Attachments:
Submitter Comments:

For the attention of The Committee,

Submission

Following is my submission on objections to the proposed changes in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislations Amendment Bill 2024.

I am a tertiary-educated mother of four children, all of whom completed between 1- 9 years in state schooling before commencing home learning. They all achieved high grades in their schooling, but I had concerns regarding their engagement and quality of learning. They were largely uninterested in the material, quickly forgot information after testing, and had knowledge gaps forming. Their curiosity and love of learning had been obliterated. My teenage children were beginning to experience academic stress and unhealthy social dynamics. I was unsatisfied with the decreasing freedoms in both primary and secondary settings.

Home Education has been life-changing for our family. After 6–12 months of home learning, my children began to regain their curiosity and motivation to learn. They now show initiative and independence in their learning. Through 1:1 attention we have managed to not only fill in the gaps in their mathematical knowledge, but also extend beyond their year level.

We have seen marked improvements in their mental health, self-esteem, and social skills, as well as strengthened familial relationships. The freedom to move physically throughout the day has radically improved the neurological condition of one of my children. The freedom intrinsic to Home Education has enabled my teenaged children to lean into their karate training, where they help teach in the leadership program, and they both represented Queensland at the National Karate Championships (Perth) in 2023. They both hold casual jobs in hospitality, in which they are gaining valuable life experience. One of them has also built and manages her own face-painting business.

My objections to the proposal include:

1. Mandatory use of the Australian Curriculum.

The decision to home educate is not one that is taken lightly, and parents conduct deep research into all available curricula and resources before tailoring a program that personally takes into consideration the individual abilities, interests and learning styles of each child. At the beginning of our home learning journey, I attempted to follow the Australian Curriculum, but quickly realised that it simply was **not going to work in the home setting**. In our multi-age learning environment, a project-based

approach has been the most practical, enjoyable and effective method. **Personalised education plans** give children the opportunity to work at their own level and pace and offer the flexibility to pursue areas of deep interest, which results in a life-long love of learning. Oftentimes, individualised learning takes us in different directions to our yearly education plans, and it is this flexibility that enables us to demonstrate a **high quality, student-centred education** when reporting to the HEU.

One only needs to look at the Literacy and Numeracy rates in Australia, and specifically Queensland, to see that even in the school setting, and with all the best of intentions, the Australian Curriculum is not delivering ideal results.¹ It is unreasonable to legislate home educating families to follow a curriculum that is designed for the school setting, and is likely to result in negative outcomes.

2. Reporting on 8 Key Learning Areas

It is unreasonable to expect home educating families to undertake more reporting than we currently do. We already spend more time and include more detail and reflection in our current reporting areas than is expected of school teachers. Tripling our reporting requirements will take more time away from our children, increase the workload for HEU officers and increase the time taken for their responses. If the HEU are only able to read a certain percentage of reports, then spending all that time preparing a report that is never read seems pointless and punitive.

3. Determination of a ‘suitable’ education environment

No person is more qualified to decide what is in a child’s best interests more than their parents. We are **not** in a co-parenting agreement with the government. As per the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (3) “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.” Parents who choose state, private or alternative schools for their children are not required to justify their decisions, so requiring this of parents choosing home education is discriminatory.

One further issue I have is that not all Home Educating families (myself included) were directly advised of these proposed changes. If it were not for connections within the home education community on social media, we would

¹ <https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/australian-curriculum-gets-an-f-for-failing-teachers-and-students-20231122-p5em4e>

have been unaware of the issue and therefore unable to share our opinions and provide submissions. This is unacceptable.

I am concerned that the legislation has been introduced without proper consultation with current home educating families. I ask that you reconsider the proposals to the education legislation and work with the home educating community to create changes that are in the best interests of all students.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns.