

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 1131  
**Submitted by:** Nathan Martin  
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**Submitter Comments:**

Dear

Committee Secretary

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane QLD 4000

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in our state. As a constituent and member of the community, it is crucial to voice my objections to the potential impact of these changes on our education system. I do not agree or approve of the changes proposed.

I am a step-parent and parent who aides my partner in home schooling our two children; one formally through HEU who is Eight years old and one informally who is Four years old currently. Both children have or are currently in process of neurodivergent assessments and diagnosis under NDIS.

Our Eight-year-old is diagnosed Autism, ADHD, Severe Phonological delay, Trauma based depression and severe anxiety with suicidal tendencies.

He was enrolled in mainstream schooling for Prep and Year 1 (2021 and 2022 retrospectively). During his time at school, he became a target for severe bullying including a sexual assault incident by multiple other students throughout those two years. He became completely withdrawn, had severe loss of weight, had severe loss of appetite, had severe loss of sleep, and barely communicated with anyone including myself and partner. He was experiencing severe meltdowns often requiring doctor visits and hospitalisation. He was petrified to leave our house or interact with anyone outside of our house including family and known friends.

As a family of four (Myself, partner and the two children) we were struggling with time-off work for each parent, struggled to maintain our own mental health, struggled in multiple ways to maintain our home life, and suffered extreme carer burnout. During this time, we had many consultations with Doctors, Psychologist, Occupational therapy, and Speech Pathologist that recommended Home Schooling through HEU Department.

At first, we wanted to research as much as possible before enrolling in him the HEU; To be enrolling him at the beginning of the year 2023 but due to our Eight-year old's severe and rapid deterioration mentally and physically we had to remove him from school in August 2022 and enter him into Provisional Registration of the HEU. During this time, we were able to formulate and create a tailored education program that included his supporting therapist's advice, and included his strengths, weaknesses, and disabilities.

We have been doing home school with HEU since. Since then, we have seen remarkable changes in our son. His physical being and mental state has dramatically improved in all areas and our overall family life including mental health and our carer roles has improved. Our sons physical being has been one of the main highlights that makes us feel so engaged in the homeschool community. With time he began to eat again, his weight is on par with his age, and he has come out of his shell that socialising has become a possibility for him. Ourselves, family,

and friends have seen our sons smile and heard his laughter which was absent before home schooling. School work wise compared to being completely shut-off he now can physically speak to our own family and anyone outside of our house very fluently and cohesively. He struggles in literacy but has improved greatly where he is able to read small blurbs. In mathematics he is above average and leans to subjects such as math, science, and biology very eloquently. He has developed a keen sense to learn about many different subjects via many avenues such as social media, internet research, you-tube videos, and gaming. He has regular discussions with me and my partner on what subject or area he'd like to learn. He has become engaged and comfortable in his learning home environment and our homeschool community with regular social interaction with others who are like himself and who homeschool.

Our four-year old daughter is diagnosed PICA and IBS, we are currently in the process of assessments for ADHD and Autism. She is not currently at school or receiving a formal education as I had to remove her from Day-care and Kindy Centres due to her constant physical illnesses and challenges however, I am informally home schooling her till her age to be registered. We believe as her parents that when the time comes that it will only be in the best interest of her whether to home school or mainstream school her.

However, we strongly feel it should be our choice as his and her parent in what is the best interest of our child as we know our children best because we spend our day-to-day with them, we feel we are able to make any choice regarding their well-fare confidently. The proposed legislative changes to home school education will have detrimental effect on not only our children but many other children and families.

I also believe it is a parental right to make that choice for our own family, our own children and how we want to live which directly will be disregarded by the changes that are being made in terms of the guiding principles of proving that home schooling is in a child's best interest of our children. Who decides what is in the best interest? and what avenues will be determined that this is the case? Is it not a parental right on who educates and how our children's upbringing is being sought?

The proposed legislation raises several pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed.

Firstly, my main concern is:

**I oppose the changes to Provisional Registration** (clause 25 section 229A, clause 23 section 206, clause 24 section 229, clause 27) as I feel in our own journey, we had to leave the schooling system immediately due to our son's physical and mental health. Having the current regulation around Provisional Registration of 60 days, it gave us the time to develop a well-thought-out plan and program for our son's education regarding his trauma, behaviours, mental health, and disabilities. I fear with the proposed change that it will create more problems than solutions such as:

- It will not give families time to heal and help their children heal - especially for those families that may need the time to heal due to any home or schooling events that may have created trauma.
- It will not give time for a parent to research, plan, organise and develop a home-schooling program especially in an event that they are having to withdraw a child from school immediately for various reasons.

- It does not mention in which specialised circumstance that a family can and will be able to withdraw a child from school in consideration to any disabilities, medical, family trauma, trauma to a child or a death in a family.
- It will put more pressure on the parents who will need to submit to provisional registration, at a time, that they may not be able to do due to circumstances that are happening in the family. Causing more stress and harm to the family unit especially regarding mental health.
- Parents may feel that they must stay in an unwelcoming and damaging environment till they have gathered all information and submit everything to HEU to get the go-ahead to be able to homeschool. Putting more risk to a child or family.
- The Heu Department is severely understaffed as it is, will this be a consideration in terms of plans being submitted and needing to be processed in a timely fashion that is consistent with the time frames that are being considered for the change in provisional registration?

**I oppose the change to the legislation in regard to using ACRA (Australian Curriculum) because:**

**20% of home schoolers follow the Australian Curriculum whereas 80% do not!**

- In our family we do not follow the Australian Curriculum in all subjects. We use the Australian Curriculum as a very simple guideline to formulate only very small parts of our program that I have created.
- Pressure to complete 8 subjects when our child may not be capable to do so for disabilities and learning delays will only create resistance, challenges, and refusal of learning thus impeding his development and learning skills moving forward in his education.
- I do not feel that ACRA supports free thinkers and the creative changes that we make and put into our home-schooling program to encourage learning and skills.
- I do not feel that ACRA supports neurodivergent children and children that have disabilities. I personally have experienced and seen in the schooling system that ACRA is against and makes no room for disabilities therefore is against the Disability Act.
- The proposed bill will potentially be discriminatory against Disability, Neurodivergence, gifted/asynchronous development and other reasons for choice such as health, religion, and any other personal choice.
- I do not support ACRA as it is a grading system that allows no changes to learning to support children under or over the skill set that they have the ability to achieve.

For example, our son is learning Mathematics at a grade 4 base in terms of ACRA (he's year 3 by Australian Curriculum standards due to age) and in English he is well below average under a preparatory level (again when he's supposed to be year 3) I feel using the ACRA system will not support his learning disabilities thus will create disadvantages going forward in and with his education.

- I am not schooled or trained to use ACRA at a level that a teacher would be, being a parent that has had no experience other than my own education, how is this considered in trying to move or force home education families to purely rely on the ACRA system?
- With the increase of information worldwide via social media, computer-based programs, internet programs - why should our children be expected to follow only one

set of learning that does not suit they're ability, interest, and capabilities in a learning home environment?

**I oppose the proposed reporting requirements and I cannot report on academic progress on all subjects every year because of:**

- Our child is not capable to complete 8 subjects per year due to his disabilities and learning difficulties.
- We are often faced with refusal and resistance if too much information is being presented. Which can cause meltdowns. He needs the one-one teaching style but also needs a quiet and slow-paced environment. Learning subjects included.
- He will not retain information presented in a format that pushes to learn things he isn't interested in nor a hurried curriculum. So, it will become a waste of time.
- He exhibited this during mainstream schooling. When he shuts-down that is the end of any movement as his teacher, parent, and carer.
- With our two children we have many therapy appointments at least 3 a week per child. We do not have time to create a space or educational program that will seem futile and not consistent with how each child learns via their learning style and how we need to maintain they're weekly commitments.
- As his teacher, parent, and carer I am supportive in the best interest of our child and children that we tailor our educational program to directly keeps their interest in learning, keeps them engaged and happy and the feeling of our learning space is a safe place to be.
- Pushing more subjects than our child can achieve and capable of will lead to disappointment and resistance and will be less fun therefore create a negative space within our home.
- This will create less time that I must maintain our house and home.
- This will create less time with my children as I will need to be focused to complete thus will dissipate the connection that I make with our children, which has become a forefront reason I am committed to home school.
- I personally believe a grading system creates negative feelings and resentment of learning. It creates disappointment if the child is unable to complete tasks. It can create animosity in a learning environment creating difficulties in relationships and friendships. In our case both our children are competitive, but they feel immense negative feelings if they do not achieve what they are trying to learn. Which directly puts pressure and expectations on themselves. It can create a rub-in-face factor if one child does complete a task and the other does not.
- The standards that the legislation is proposing is more work that of a teacher in the schooling system. How is the proposed change and government agency going to support parents in teaching and reporting?

In light of these concerns, I urge you to carefully consider the proposed education legislation and to prioritize the best interest of our rapidly growing and proactive home educating community. I implore you to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborate approach to policymaking that values input from all stakeholders and ensures the integrity and quality of our education system.

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

Sincerely and with regards,

Nathan Martin.

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