

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1185
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee, As an active member of the Queensland community, I am writing you regarding the proposed changes to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Additionally, I would like to provide detailed insights into our family's experience with homeschooling and its profound impact on our four children. All four of our children have been homeschooled for the entirety or a significant part of their education, showcasing the diversity and success of alternative educational paths. Currently, our eldest is excelling as a third-year carpentry apprentice; our second child is pursuing a university degree in information management; our third, Jack, is actively involved in the Navy Cadets and Sailing community and on track to attend ADFA, and our youngest, Matilda, is an active member of the homeschooling community with aspirations to become a paramedic. Our decision to homeschool was driven by the inability of the education system to provide for and protect our vulnerable autistic son, Blake. At a very young age, despite being twice gifted, he faced challenges within the traditional schooling system about supporting his disability and extreme bullying. Even attempts to enrol him in an accelerated program were met with inflexibility due to his physical limitations. The prescribed Australian National Curriculum did not cater to his unique abilities, and the system's emphasis on perceived weaknesses rather than strengths hindered his progress. Blake has thrived in a homeschooling environment, studying Latin, engaging in advanced theology, philosophy, and ethics study, and now excelling at university despite being unable to fulfil Australian Curriculum-specific educational requirements. He benefits from a fully supported network of professionals and family, emphasising the importance of an individualised plan that addresses his holistic development. Our eldest son, now a third-year carpentry apprentice, faced academic challenges due to profound dyslexia. We crafted a personalised curriculum through homeschooling that allowed a slower, more focused approach to English and math, tailored to his kinaesthetic learning style. Simultaneously, homeschooling supported his emotional and physical health, enabling him to join the state gymnastics team. He gained hands-on experience with the broader community in farming and animal husbandry, excelling in these areas. Rather than struggling as a student, he grew up perceiving himself as a valuable and contributing member of our society, with personal goals and expectations of success. This success story underscores the flexibility and effectiveness of homeschooling in nurturing each child's unique talents and potential. Moreover, it's crucial to consider the complexity of the Australian Curriculum. This document, acknowledged as intricate, can be challenging for homeschooling parents to interpret and implement without the support of curriculum specialists. Homeschooling often involves • hands-on and multiage learning experiences, • leveraging the expertise of parents, • community members, and • experts. Implementing the Australian Curriculum may limit the flexibility to explore diverse topics and create multiage learning groups, potentially stifling the dynamic learning environment that homeschooling can provide. For neurodivergent children, such as those with specific learning styles or needs, an individualised and project-led learning approach might be more effective than strictly adhering to a standardised curriculum and homeschooling offers tailored education for neurodivergent children, allowing them to thrive and succeed based on their unique abilities. A key advantage of homeschooling is its flexibility to tailor education to a child's unique needs. Families may choose this approach due to a lack of fit with the traditional education system or health issues. Homeschooling requires substantial time and energy for research and facilitation, demonstrating a commitment to understanding and addressing the child's specific needs, especially when traditional methods are ineffective. Statistics from the Home Education Unit's research suggest that a significant portion of homeschooling

families, two out of three, choose this path due to underlying disabilities or health issues. This underscores the importance of flexibility in educational approaches, acknowledging that homeschooling can be a successful and beneficial choice for families with unique learning needs. Additionally, I am concerned about the proposed change to the Education Act's timing. Di Farmer MP has rushed the process, leaving very little time for you to read, consider, reflect, and gain input from all stakeholders before submissions are due. I would like to know if this timeline is typical for such wide-reaching changes or if this is being rushed through for altruistic reasons. As a highly invested education community member, all stakeholders must consider these changes more thoroughly and deliberately to ensure the best outcomes for our students and families. Our children have succeeded or are succeeding in being active members of the wider Queensland community and the thriving homeschooling community without adhering to the 'Australian Curriculum' or justifying their reasons for homeschooling based on qualitative information.

Summary of Key Points of concern

1. The proposed shift to a single application process for home education in Queensland may not provide a streamlined experience for parents, as it could prevent some from applying and may drive families away from the system. Rather than removing the option for provisional registration, a panel of home education experts could provide guidance on how to apply successfully.
2. Requiring parents to provide reports on education during previous registration periods may lead to over-reporting and disengagement from regulators. A panel of home education experts could be used to help parents understand the need for reporting and prevent non-compliance.
3. While the proposed periods for decision-makers seem reasonable, the 14-day grace period from compulsory school attendance may need to be longer for the regulator to communicate that the family has been registered. This could lead to confusion and more truancy action letters. Families facing unforeseen circumstances should be given extra time to provide information.
4. There is no clear definition of "high quality" education in the context of home education, as the term is used but not defined in education declarations and academic literature. Even when definitions exist, they are associated with affective skills that cannot be qualified. Developed for schools and teachers, the Australian Curriculum must be more suitable for creating a high-quality home education program.