

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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My name is Candice, and I am dedicated to homeschooling my four children, ranging in ages from 13 to 6. I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Education Act, which stand to impact my children significantly.

We have been homeschooling all our children since they were eligible to be registered. Initially residing in Victoria, we received fantastic support from the education department concerning our children's education. Three years ago, we relocated to Queensland and continued homeschooling here. Although the requirements we needed to meet were more rigorous compared to Victoria, I recognized the importance of regulation and accountability. Each year, I meticulously craft an education plan for each child, tailored to their individual needs, covering all learning areas of the curriculum. I then provide samples of their work alongside annotations and other reporting measures. Throughout this process, I have never encountered any issues regarding my plans or reporting.

My foremost concern, and the one that deeply troubles me, pertains to the wording concerning "eligibility to homeschool." What exactly are the eligibility factors? Who has the authority to decide what is best for my child? Why are parents not afforded the autonomy to determine what is in their child's best interests? No one knows my children as intimately as I do. I am acquainted with their strengths, weaknesses, and how to facilitate their growth. The notion that the government could potentially strip away my authority over my own children is disconcerting.

My next concern revolves around the requirement to strictly follow the Australian curriculum. For the past eight years, we have been using the same curriculum, which has proven exceptionally effective for our children. They consistently outperform their peers in traditional schooling across various subjects. This year, my eldest, currently in grade 8, was provided with an Australian curriculum-aligned textbook. However, the material proved to be too facile, necessitating the purchase of a grade level above to adequately challenge him.

Regarding curriculum, will we have the flexibility to utilize curriculums that are not specifically Australian-based but still meet the requisite standards? Will children be permitted to progress at a pace suitable for their abilities? For instance, my eldest child is poised to commence university courses within the next two years. If he is mandated to adhere strictly to the Australian curriculum, will he be compelled to wait until he has "graduated" before embarking on university-level studies, despite being academically prepared for higher-level learning?

One of the most enriching aspects of homeschooling is the ability to tailor learning experiences to each child's needs, interests, and strengths. Last year, a significant portion of our history and geography lessons focused on Europe. Subsequently, we embarked on a six-week trip to Europe, where our children were able to immerse themselves in the subjects they had studied firsthand. They walked the corridors of the Colosseum, recounting its history, and elucidated the nuances of famous artworks as we explored the Louvre and the Sistine Chapel. This exemplifies why we have chosen to homeschool—to provide our children with experiences and an education that they would not typically receive within the confines of the traditional school system.

While I acknowledge the necessity for regulations and accountability, parents are the primary decision-makers for their children and, as such, should not have their rights regarding their children's education infringed upon.

Regards,
Candice Matthews