

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

**Submission No:** 1217  
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**Submitter Comments:**

Dear EGPA Committee Members,

I would like to introduce myself, a published research scientist, a past Qld state policy worker and manager, a small business owner, a homeschooling mother of 4 for the past 14 years and the lead admin to the largest Queensland Home Education Facebook group, with over 20,000 members and growing daily.

I want to share my experiences and knowledge about the impact the Education General Provisions and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 will have. I am that person at the front end, on the ground, who has not only observed what has been happening, but also supported and empowered 1000s of home educating families in Queensland to homeschool their children, as there is no other support available.

At the moment we have a very small team of volunteers in my group who work very hard in their own time to interpret the requests from the Home Education Unit (HEU) to help parents write what's needed and check their paperwork before sending to reassure them that they can home educate their own children. We have been doing this for over 6 years in that specific group. There is no SUPPORT, financial or from government in Queensland Education to help with this process, it's swim or sink for parents often under high stress due to their children's needs.

I heard reference to social media being mentioned in the briefing papers as a reason for the increase in home education, what I have seen is that people turn to home education when the school system fails them, or isn't suitable for many reasons. Social media is how the home ed community connects and supports each other and make those social meet ups, as it's a lonely journey otherwise.

Social media isn't driving this, we just support those choosing this option. Most families would prefer to keep their children in school and keep living the lifestyle they are used to and the one that is more accepted. Home schooling changes everything, for us it was a much better way to live as a family for the better.

The proposed changes to increase Reporting and Planning and to show *academic* progress in all ACARA learning areas will be unmanageable; For both for HEU to be able to read and process the increase in paperwork, and for the parent on the ground doing the educating. We have been providing paperwork to HEU, that in the majority, is approved first time, as we show "high quality learning" and progress for many years. The proposed changes will increase the burden on the parent for no positive outcome.

***What aim is the increase in Reporting and Plan requirements meeting? How does this help the safety of the child?***

Have you seen the massive influx of teachers to home ed for their own children, noticed the exit from school that continues well past COVID restrictions? I also admin another large group that connects teachers, seeking another way to share their passion, with home schoolers nationally to access their services. What is noticeable is the increase in teachers walking away from that over regulated restricted system to find something better. I am adding 10 teachers a day, who share their disillusionment and hope for something more suitable for themselves and the children.

***Why is this failing system now being thrust on home educators?***

***What recent data can be shared that shows the outcomes from school children against ACARA that makes it so essential?***

***What support will be provided to educate and train home school parents to provide what teachers are trained for 4 years to do?***

***What support to educate parents to write these new copious requirements?***

***Will the equipment and resources be provided too, and fund us like schools?***

The financial impact is huge enough with only 1 parent being able to work full time, this will also now make families feel forced to BUY packaged curriculum that wont suit their children and cause more issues in the home and waste their money.

The first round of consultations did not include most of what is in the proposed changes which was supposedly all about helping HEU improve their handling times. I note that the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of consultations were with NSW based businesses who do this similar model already, what a windfall for them. The 2<sup>nd</sup> round actively excluded the 2 representatives of our large home schooling community and instead consulted with other stakeholders who don't home school in Qld.

I myself and many others have received no communication from Qld Ed about this process and the proposed legislation changes, yet we are required to provide submissions within 2 weeks for something we haven't even be formally told about is happening. If I wasn't on social media I would have no idea that this was even happening.

***Does Qld Ed have any consideration for those who actually educate in their homes and how it works now?***

***Where is the communication with all registered Home Education families and time to respond?***

***Do you understand that **this is an INCREASE** in the paperwork, and that HEU staff will not be able to assess them all? How inequitable that would be...***

Families in my group share many, many similar stories of trying everything possible in mainstream schools before finding their way to our group or to home schooling. That decision is not something they choose lightly, or without lots of anxiety, stress and worry. They just want whats best for their child to grow into a happy, healthy person who wants to contribute to society and succeed in their own best way.

Their stories are heartbreaking, but oh so familiar with content about the failure in schools to provide what their children need. I am sure you have received many similar submissions with individual specifics about the bullying, disengagement, suicidal, depressed, anxiety riddled children

who once removed from school start to heal and learn again in their own time and way. I will share my own at the end of this submission.

These families tell stories on how tapping into their innate desire to learn through their interests and passions and what inspires them in life their children return to them. Then they become more able to take on the expectations of society and education and start to expand their learning horizon. These families do what all these recent new pop up flexischools and alternative schools are trying to do, re-engage the children.

The mental health of children is in such a bad state that, as you would be aware, suicide is the highest killer in out children aged 10-14! This is not coming from the homeschooling community, these children are so damaged in school that families are looking for an alternative so their children don't commit suicide as teens or as adults. Children are self harming in schools daily and others are exposed to that and more.

I want to highlight that removal of ALL immediate provisional registration options, is not in the safety or best interests of the child. So many parents share how their child is so mentally or physically unwell and can not send them back into that environment, the option of provisional registration is something parents need for the safety of their children. The idea that a few weeks without a formal plan is detrimental to their education, is unfounded and narrow in the view of how learning actually happens.

***If the aim is to improve safety for children, why remove ALL Provisional Registration options?***

Parents need time to be able to assess the 20 Distance Education (DE) schools, HEU and make a decision about how to move forward, else they jump at the first one they hear about. Some of the DE schools are often closed till end of term and approval processes can take time. The Provisional Only option assists with reducing the load on the standard process, when people will then use for short term as they decide their next steps. Many DE schools are already full.

***Do you realise that these changes will make the pressure on DE schools increase, and they will limit who can access those services too?***

Jumping into any DE school is not helpful for the child as it may mean changing again and again till they find the right fit. The 207 Provisional Only Registration option allows for monitoring and tracking of the child while that happens. Parents will now book out over booked Drs for medical certificates to cover that time period while continuing to being harassed by their school.

***What options will there now be for URGENT removal from school, in the safety and best interests of the child?***

The current ability to apply to HEU under section 208 and then send a Plan in a few weeks later, provides that much needed space for a parent to think about and learn what they want to do and how they will do that, moving forward, when they have had to remove their child suddenly.

Under the proposal they will feel forced to buy the first thing they come across and send that in to HEU, which can't then be in the best interests of the child. The current process means we can target our teaching and resources and ideas around the child's needs, which is the best private education you can get, its not a one size fits all approach, its about adjusting to the child.

The briefings around theses changes and the very sad circumstance of one once schooled, and then home schooled child, to now regulate heavily over CONTENT on academics is a very long bow to draw.

***Where was/is the support for the 100s in the school system who take their own lives?***

***How do the proposed changes prevent that happening in the home, whether in mainstream of home schooled?***

That child was also IN SCHOOL to start with, and no doubt was already troubled, hence why that parent was trying something else. We also feel as a community so strongly for that poor family now being used as an example, and the trauma that must be adding to them.

The “continuity” of academics sited in the briefing statements, does NOTHING to prevent a tragic episode from occurring in the future. If anything these proposed changes will perpetuate the same circumstances in the home, as that may be why the child disengaged at school. Or will cause the parent to persist in school to the child's detriment, which I did with my eldest and its my biggest regret as she lost more self confidence and self esteem and more damage was done.

Many will choose to drop out of the system altogether or never register due to the proposed extensive requirements with paperwork. I have already had many private messages and read posts where that is what they are doing, aim to do or want to do. Those unregistered are choosing to stay that way as these changes are so restrictive. Other States do not have this level of regulation home schooling, the briefing about this bill was incorrect and lacking in details.

The current home ed legislation was written nearly 20 years ago to try and include all the unregistered children in Queensland, and hence why it is specified as “high quality learning”, to encompass all families doing the best for their children in the many different ways that work.

***Do you know this will make more people state they will move interstate/disappear/be unregistered?***

The impact on children and parents already is palpable, they are scared and openly worried that they will have to change what they are doing to the detriment of their child, based on no evidence.

We already provide detailed yearly PLANS and REPORTS that show high quality learning, that is beyond any particular curriculum. Ticking off ACARA will become the focus, and not the child's learning needs. The child can not learn if they are not willing, it doesn't matter what you legislate.

***Why would modern thinking people want to limit the education for children by restricting their learning to ACARA?***

My eldest was 8 (now 22), when I suddenly had to remove her from school due to negative impact it had, though it was not without many years of prior struggle in school. She did have school refusal before it even had a term assigned to it for 2 years. She had a team of professionals keeping her in school with multiple weekly appointments and more. Homeschooling her was something we had discussed with my husband for 3 years or more, as perhaps our last option to help her.

She was diagnosed in Grade 4, with ASD, ADHD and ODD/PDA and has an extensively high IQ. That information helped me to learn how to tap into her strengths and adjust the way I thought she needed to learn. While I had thought she should do what they did in school, that didn't work at all for her. So I spent a couple of years learning about education and how we learn best.

I actually made a whole curriculum for her first year all around clay, as that's all she liked to do. Yes you can cover clay in many ways, Geography – where clay is located, History – all its uses over time, Maths – weight, cost, economics of , English - anything about researching and writing about clay, HPE – digging for clay, Art – making with clay. If I had been restricted to ACARA and not “high quality learning” then I could not have engaged her at all, as she was all ready so bored with the school curriculum and we would have continued arguing, crying and screaming daily.

Fast forward, I learnt to follow her interests and be more child led in approach and she devoured robotics and she completed tertiary courses in her tweens. At 15 she completed a full time Cert III in IT and then Diploma in IT at age 16, she had aims for University with Engineering. That child the school told me to medicate in grade 4 for compliance; HEU rang me to congratulate me on doing so well with her education and obtaining a great outcome.

I am so grateful I could educate her in a way that suited her, I had learnt all about ACARA, and was dismayed as to how repetitive and shallow it is, which doesn't suit gifted kids who delve deep and learn all there is to know. It also isn't that great for any child that isn't “average”. My 3 others are unique individuals too and have and are thriving through providing an education that suits their individual needs for their future.

We already can access ACARA for ideas and inspiration, and do. Many parents learn about all the other options available and they move on and enhance their child’s education with more. Hence the quoting 20% as often the new families do what feels familiar till it doesn't work anymore. It is also included on the Templates that HEU provide to parents, it isn't a good indication at all about what we actually do in our homes, which is more often than not to spend more time in the community.

Most of us, the 80% do more, and yes we do it differently to school as we aren't competing against others for scores and external rewards based on memory. Instead we are preparing our children to access higher learning or to start work as they are ready. Home ed students at university out perform their mainstream peers as they are already independently learning and know what they want to do in their future (see US based data).

Restricting access to tertiary learning till 11/12 is so limiting, when many are already doing tertiary courses at 13+. Many start University earlier than their school aged peers. One on one with our children means they learn faster and more efficiently than in school, we are mentors and tutors and

guides and our children are not limited to grades or a specific program. Learning is not linear and does not come from being told what is to be learnt at a point in time.

There are so many worries with the many changes and I haven't even mentioned them all.

*Eg. WHO now determines what is in the best interests of the child? It used to be the parent... why has that changed?*

*How can parents implement a Senior Syllabus with no support or training? Why do we need to do that when our children are already flourishing? What benefit will be given to home ed kids who somehow manage that – eg QCE?*

*Removing the Certificate – why? Its electronic anyway, one click for admin. We use that for many things in the community to access discounts and show we are registered.*

The main proposals are ungovernable, impossible to be implemented and makes a mockery of what home ed parents already do for their children which is in their best interests.

**There is no one best way to learn, nor should we be restricted to a one size fits all approach.**

Thank you for considering the issues raised and hearing the negative impacts the proposed bill will have. The only change that seems to assist some children is adjusting the age to 18, great for children in foster care who home school.

I oppose the proposed changes regarding home education as detailed above.