

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

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

Parents who choose to homeschool must be able to choose a quality curriculum that works for their child. Forcing homeschooling children to follow the national school Australian curriculum **does not ensure the child or young person receives a high-quality education** (As required (highlighted below) in Amendment of s 7 (Guiding Principles))

Parents must be responsible for determining what is in the best interests of their child and responsible for their own child's education and not be forced to follow an inferior curriculum that sets their child up for a substandard education. The national school curriculum (Australian curriculum) is of poor quality and is not fit for purpose and is well behind world leaders.

### **As outlined by the AFR and The Guardian (Nov, 2023) :**

“The lack of depth and quality in the National Curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum) is one of the key factors behind Australia’s relentless drift downwards on international tests. Australian school kids are being undermined by a poor-quality curriculum. **“The low quality of the Australian curriculum embeds failure and inequality in Australian education”** the report from education research and consulting group Learning First reads. Ben Jensen, Learning First’s chief executive, said that since 2018, average science scores of Australian school students had fallen by 24 points, equivalent to nearly one full year of schooling. The continuing long-term decline in Australian students’ reading, mathematics and science skills, with 10 countries now with “significantly higher” results in reading than Australia, 23 in maths and 12 in science”

<b>Clause 18</b>	<b>Amendment of s 7 (Guiding principles)</b>	3
	(3) Section 7—	22
	<i>insert—</i>	23
	(da) for chapter 9, part 5, home education of a child or young person should be provided in a way that—	24
	(i) is in the best interests of the child or young person taking into account their safety and wellbeing; and	25
	(ii) ensures the child or young person receives a high-quality education;	26
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<b>Clause 68</b>	<b>Amendment of s 217 (Standard conditions)</b>	14
	(5) Section 217—	19
	<i>insert—</i>	20
	(3) In this section—	21
	<i>approved education and training program</i> means—	22
	(a) the national school curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum)—	23
	(i) developed and administered by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority established under the <i>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008</i> (Cwlth), section 5; and	24
	(ii) published on the authority’s website; or	25
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**The Australian Financial Review**

**Nov 27, 2023 Julie Hare Education editor**

## ***Why Australian school kids are failing***

Australian science students are being taught around half the content of those in seven other international jurisdictions in the first nine years of schooling, which embeds “failure and inequality” in the education system. The lack of depth and quality in the curriculum is one of the key factors behind Australia’s relentless drift downwards on international tests, such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) run by the OECD, according to educationalist Ben Jensen.

Australian school kids are being undermined by a poor-quality curriculum, says Ben Jensen, CEO of Learning First. Eamon Gallagher A year-long project that benchmarked the Australian science curriculum against England, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, the US and two Canadian provinces, Alberta and Quebec, found it covered just 44 topics compared to an average of 72 topics in the other systems. Just five topics are covered in depth across nine years, compared to an average of 23 in other countries, and the curriculum showed consistently poor sequencing of content.

“The low quality of the Australian curriculum embeds failure and inequality in Australian education,” the report from education research and consulting group Learning First reads.

Ben Jensen, Learning First’s chief executive, said that since 2018, average science scores of Australian school students had fallen by 24 points, equivalent to nearly one full year of schooling.

“In other words, students who were 15 in 2018 and had spent most of their schooling studying the Australian curriculum were performing at a level nearly one year below the level of their peers who were studying in 2009, the year before the curriculum was introduced.”

A national curriculum was introduced in 2010 to ensure that children across the country had the same educational basis. It is administered by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Agency (ACARA), and state education departments also create their own curriculum which can be wrapped around the national version and adapted to local needs.

“We see that a lot of good policies and programs are coming unstuck because of the national curriculum,” Dr Jensen said. During that time, he notes, a number of countries have leapfrogged Australian students’ performance on PISA. He said it is possible that if the science curriculum is lacking in content, quality, sequencing and depth, that could be true for other subjects such as English, maths, and history.

While a direct link cannot be made to the curriculum, Dr Jensen said it was impossible to ignore the relationship between its introduction and subsequent decline in student achievement.

The debate about falling academic standards in Australia usually centres around teacher quality and funding, Dr Jensen said, with too little focus on what kids are being taught, not just how.

A spokesman for ACARA rejected the report, saying the Australian curriculum was “world class” and that it “identifies the essential content all Australian children should learn, including in science”. The science curriculum was formally endorsed by all nine education ministers in April 2022, the spokesman said.

“This followed a significant review that reflected feedback from subject, curriculum and teacher experts from all states and territories, as well as public consultation.

“The review process also included international benchmarking with high-achieving counterparts such as Singapore, which found the Australian curriculum was on par with these curricula in terms of overall breadth, depth, and rigour.”

In an introductory chapter to a book examining the 2018 PISA results, Portuguese statistician Nuno Crato asserts that additional funding is only correlated to education improvements to a certain point, after which it becomes insignificant.

Professor Crato says that it is the curriculum, not the quality of teaching, that is the single most important factor in improving students' knowledge and skills. "Everything starts with the curriculum," Professor Crato writes, adding that it needs to be "ambitious, demanding and set clear objectives".

Compared with the Australian system, American students are given nearly four times the amount of content on biological sciences and 2.5 per cent the amount on physical sciences. In Quebec, students are given three times more earth and space sciences content than their Australian counterparts.

Evolution is taught in year 10 in Australia, compared to year 5 in Alberta and year 6 in England. Dr Jensen said ACARA had simply not done the work in benchmarking the curriculum against others around the world.

"There is no way you could do the research on what is a quality curriculum and end up with the Australian science curriculum," Dr Jensen said.

"It's a failure of process where they haven't done [what is] required to make a world-class curriculum."

## **The Guardian**

**Mon 27 Nov 2023 Caitlin Cassidy**

### ***Australian education in long-term decline due to poor curriculum, report says***

Students are learning about half the science content of school systems in similar countries, consulting group has found An overhaul of Australia's curriculum is needed to reverse a long-term decline in international education test results, a new report suggests.

The findings, released by the education research and consulting group Learning First on Monday benchmarked Australia's science curriculum against seven comparable education systems: England, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, the US and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Quebec.

The report found Australian students were learning 44 science topics in their first nine years of schooling compared with an average of 74.

It also found the process through which the science curriculum was developed was "broken" and not based on leading research or quality benchmarking.

Australia's curriculum also lacked the depth of learning – with five topics covered in depth compared with an average of 22 across the same timeframe. The chief executive of Learning First, Ben Jensen, said Australia had stagnated or declined across all subjects in international test results for more than a decade and measures to reverse these trends had failed.

Australia's 100 wealthiest schools earned almost \$4.8bn in 2021, data reveals

"Whenever results come out showing the decline in Australian education we point the finger at teachers and raise issues around quality, but it's the national curriculum that's the problem," Jensen said.

"What our data shows is there are massive holes – it's since the Australian curriculum was introduced that international scores have been falling.

"All the research says the quality of the curriculum taught has a significant impact on learning, performance and equity." The report also found consistent poor sequencing of content, whereby topics weren't taught until much later in schooling, which research showed was a vital measure for effective teaching and learning. Evolution wasn't taught until year 10 in the Australian curriculum, compared with years five and six in Quebec and year six in England. Australia's national curriculum, introduced by the former Labor government in 2010, was hailed as a new "back to basics, world-class" system.

It was developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, providing the foundation of state and territory education systems, including achievement standards, content descriptions and teaching guides. But since its introduction, student performance in international science assessments is now one full year below where it was, with results also falling in reading and maths. In the latest results of the Programme for International Student Assessment, released in 2019, Australian students' performance in mathematics fell to the OECD average, the first time results in one of the three core competencies has done so since international comparisons began in 2000. An urgent overhaul of VCE exams is needed after multiple errors, experts say. But how did this happen? The results confirmed a continuing long-term decline in Australian students' reading, mathematics and science skills, with 10 countries now with "significantly higher" results in reading than Australia, 23 in maths and 12 in science.

The OECD's assessment is held every three years and tests 15-year-old students on their performance in maths, science and reading. Compared with students in the highest performing country, Singapore, Australians were more than a year behind in reading, about three years behind in mathematics and almost two years behind in science. Jensen said Australia set a low standard for what students should learn. He said rather than teacher development programs, an overhaul of the curriculum was needed and pointed to New South Wales, which has released a draft of its new year 7-to-10 curriculum. The draft has just over 50% more science content than the existing version. "We see this as a giant failure of process," Jensen said, adding: "We can find no evidence the process to develop any of the other subjects were better.

"It should be based on the best research and what's working in classrooms." A spokesperson for Acara said the current curriculum, version 9.0, was "world class" and identified the essential content all Australian children should learn, including in science. They said the science curriculum was formally endorsed by all nine education ministers in April 2022. The curriculum is subject to a six-year cycle of review.

"This followed a significant review that reflected feedback from subject, curriculum and teacher experts from all states and territories, as well as public consultation," they said. "The review process also included international benchmarking with high-achieving counterparts such as Singapore, which found the Australian curriculum was on par with these curricula in terms of overall breadth, depth, and rigour