

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

To the Committee, I would like to write to you about the changes being considered to homeschool education. We are a family whose children left mainstream education and moved to distance education with excellent results. This has given us excellent insight into the workings of the Australian Curriculum. Both of my children have diagnosed disabilities. This can cause them to both be more advanced than their peers and in other areas further behind. They have both thrived outside of traditional school and academically are now high achievers. Both strive for high grades and now more often than not in distance education are A grade students. Traditional school did not suit them. These are a few of the reasons that they struggled: •The classes were too big •The classes are too loud •The behaviour of other students was often violent and scared them •They couldn't concentrate due to distractions •Accommodations due to disability often did not occur •Lack of teacher aide support •They were the target of bullying and coercion from other students to take advantage of their disability related gullibility. I would also like to draw to your attention another way mainstream school failed one of my children. Beside other disability my child has a physical learning disability (dysgraphia and dyslexia) that should have been picked up at school. My child somehow passed all the way through to grade two yet did not have the physical ability to write a sentence. How did the teachers grade him without being able to write? Why did they not warn us something was wrong? Since then with years of physical therapy and support from home, he is now slowly making some progress at handwriting. His academic success is due to disability support to use assistive technology to produce high level work that his physical disability makes impossible. We are into our 5th year of distance education and while it has been working well, as we move into the more senior years, I am not sure if a move to HEU will be more appropriate for one of my children. The national curriculum is not bespoke when it comes to children with disability. My child is very academically advanced, and he has a very one-track mind. This means that it would be possible for him to speed through possibly 3 to 4 years of maths in say 6 months if he focused on just that subject. It could then take him longer to understand and develop say essay writing. Seeing up close, as a distance education parent how the Australian Curriculum works, has shown me it wouldn't work for my disabled child in a homeschooling setting. We couldn't cover 8 subjects in a single year. Currently via one of your state public distance education schools, my child has accommodations to only work on 4 subjects with additional time, support and a teacher aide. As my child moves through the grades it is obvious the senior curriculum is moving both too fast and too slow for him depending on the subject. I would like the flexibility to be able to nurture my child to be successful in his learning. Not to be just pushed forward before grasping content or slowed down when he has understood. Ultimately, I think the proposed changes are of great concern for disabled students. My son as a NDIS participant works very hard in therapy to become successful. He has every chance of being a success, going to uni, getting a job and living a happy life. He is likely to be the person in a white coat at the back of the lab working on something incredible in the future. When children learn from home they work at their own pace before moving forward. This is critical and this flexibility sees kids get a deeper understanding of subject material. My 11yo last week taught me what a necrocracy was. Do you know what a necrocracy is? I bet you few 11-year-olds do. He knows because when learning about democracy in a home setting, he was able to dive a little deeper than he would have been able at school. BTW a necrocracy is a country ruled by a dead leader and North Korea is the only current necrocracy. We are not hippies, religious or hold alternative values. We have older successful children who are university educated. We have been pushed into alternative education because mainstream schooling has failed students with

disabilities. We need more diverse programs and alternative school options than are currently available. Not all students learn the same way. I also hold concern for the language used by Minister Di Farmer when discussing the new "Guiding Principles and the wording "in the best interest of the child" who exactly makes that decision? I encourage your department to look at the number of students leaving mainstream to go to either distance education or homeschooling. It's been referenced that over 2/3rds of these children take this leap because of disability or medical needs. Making it more difficult for these families is unconscionable. These kids are leaving because school is not in their best interest. It seems to me the spotlight here should be on **WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING SO WRONG THAT SO MANY KIDS ARE LEAVING!** When students complete their QCE the only compulsory learning areas are literacy and numeracy and that should be the only essential requirements for homeschooling families as well. Like the QCE that gives children choice in learning areas, homeschool should have this same limited requirement. I encourage you to defer any decision making till proper evaluation can be done. This should include: •Why are children leaving mainstream? •What support can we offer families who homeschool? The financial burden of loss of employment to home educate, typically women, is not being considered. •How can we collaborate with home educated families so like mainstream education it can continuously develop. Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider my submission. I look forward to your well-considered feedback.