

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1265
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee I am writing to object to the proposals in the Education Bill 2024. I am extremely concerned about the proposed changes and how they will affect so many children who are being failed by the education system. Of particular concern is the need to demonstrate that homeschooling is in the best interest of the child. I feel that this is an obscure statement and suggests that parents will not be trusted to make decisions on what is in the best interest of their children. Yet the proposed legislation changes don't indicate how or who will assess this. Another concern is that home educators will need to follow the National Curriculum. My son was in school for two years, following the National Curriculum but was exhibiting anxiety, school refusal and ultimately delinquency. The school suggested a variety of tests to determine what was wrong with him: oppositional defiance disorder was suggested. A psychometric assessment by the school social worker discovered that he was academically gifted. Further testing showed that he was highly asynchronous with a six year learning gap between his English skills and Mathematic skills. After a year of attempts at adjusting the curriculum and finally acceleration, the school principal and my son's teacher advised us that they felt that there was no school that could cater to his learning needs and homeschooling was the only option. At this stage I had a preschooler and a six-month-old baby, and my son was eight, angry, wanting to die and attending school only to learn how to be a delinquent. When I reluctantly began homeschooling, our family was traumatised, isolated and unsupported. I was expected to do what a team of trained experts could not do, whilst also caring for younger siblings and running a house. After the stress and anxiety caused by his schooling experience my son refused to write or do anything resembling schoolwork. After 18 months of this, and desperate for support we joined a distance education school and went back to the National curriculum. We tried three different distance education schools, and the focus was heavily on getting students to do the curriculum, at their age and grade appropriate level. Once again, the curriculum did not suit his learning needs. It could not go fast enough for his off-the-charts English ability and slow enough for his constant struggles with Maths. However I was fortunate that I had a choice, I had free access to the National Curriculum as a guide, yet I could pick and choose and tailor his education to his needs, and our family's needs. Over time I was able to provide a much higher quality education that met his unique learning style and pace. If this proposal goes through families will not have a choice, will not be free to choose what is best for their children, and will not have time to plan and heal. The removal of provisional registration would require that a family in the turmoil that precedes the decision to homeschool would have no time to plan a high-quality educational plan. They would be forced to leave their child in a damaging situation while they tried to get their head around homeschooling registration. These proposed changes to the educational bill will only hurt children. My son is now eighteen, works two jobs, is a prolific writer and history buff, is an active member of the community, does not exhibit any signs of a behavioural disorder or delinquency and all despite the National Curriculum, not because of it. I ask that you please take the time to consult with families who are homeschooling, this amendment cannot be passed.