

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1288
Submitted by: Josephine Banks-Watson
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Dear Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee,

My husband and I are second generation home educating parents of two, a 9 and an 11 year old, and I am writing to express my concerns with some of the provisions in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The proposed legislation for all home educating students to follow the Australian Curriculum completely undermines the nature of home education: to support, nurture and educate your child outside of a classroom environment. Although I suspect that my children would be fine under the proposed changes, as we don't have any pronounced neurodiversities, the impact of enforcing the national curriculum on the broad range of neurodiverse friends we interact with in our home education group would be devastating. This is not what home education is about. I think that this possible new regulation would discourage a lot of people from being registered home educators, but not from home educating.

I am pro-education, to be clear—this is a distinction I sometimes find myself having to draw when discussing home education with parents whose children are in school—but I know that schools and classrooms don't work for every child and that there are so many ways to learn. Every human is different and unique, so trying to make everyone learn the same thing the same way is bound to fail. And is already failing in the classroom setting.

The second issue that I have is with what feels like an underlying principle of the amendments in general, which seems to undermine a parent's ability to know what is right for their own child. This should not be up to anyone else. I agree that there could be assessors who would conduct home visits once a year to make sure it's not a harmful situation, as there are always exceptions, but this needs to be very clearly spelled out and not left up to interpretation or taken advantage of by biased individuals or someone's whim. I use the term 'second generation home educator' to describe myself as I was home educated alongside my three brothers in northern NSW. We had an assessor come out once a year to check our learning environment and our overall progress. This was always an enjoyable experience.

On a somewhat related note, I would like to briefly address the proposed switch from certificates to more detailed notices, which seems all too likely to lead to greater risks in terms of data security. I understand that this proposed change may very well be intended to make things easier for home educating parents by improving the connectivity between the Home Education Unit and Centrelink, but I think that such a change is a step in the wrong direction, given the rising level of risk to data security

and privacy these days. Speaking from personal experience, I can't say that I've ever had any particularly negative or overwhelmingly difficult experiences with contacting Centrelink for home education purposes, though I can certainly understand that I might feel differently if I was the parent of children with various neurological challenges. However, in the absence of clearer language regarding this proposed change, I worry about its impact being generally negative rather than positive.

Thank you for taking the time to read my response.

Sincerely,

Josephine Banks-Watson