

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1308
Submitted by: Brook Burton
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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the recent education legislative changes around homeschooling that have been proposed in Queensland.

As a constituent, concerned mother and a member of the local homeschooling community, I believe it is crucial to voice our apprehensions regarding the potential impacts of these changes on our children's education and collectively all children who choose to homeschool in Queensland.

Firstly, I'd like to oppose the introduction of home educated children in having their curriculum choices reduced to only the Australian Curriculum.

Making the decision to homeschool our children wasn't a decision that my husband and I made lightly. I forwent returning to the work force and an additional income for our family for the mental health of our eldest son and what we believe to be a far superior and quality education for our children than the Australian Curriculum.

Our eldest son has been diagnosed with Autism level 2 and ADHD. He was originally enrolled in the local primary school in our area from Prep until term 2 of Year 2. Due to his neurodivergence, school was always challenging for him – the noise, the chaos, the need to sit still for long periods of time, learning things he already knew or were of no interest to him and the constant pressure to comply with all the rules controlling a class of 30 students requires. He was overwhelmed, highly anxious and disengaged.

Despite the school's best efforts and their accommodations to support his additional needs, I was being called repetitively to the school to collect him due to his "misbehaviour", and at times because they were unable to locate him inside the school grounds. A quality education was most definitely not taking place for him. With his best interest always in front of mind and his agreement, my husband and I chose to pull him out of school and home educate him. I spent many hours and days researching different curricula from around the world and the best ways to engage and support him in his learning.

I have now been home educating him for the last 3.5 years and have watched my son thrive – not by following the Australian Curriculum, but by creating an individualised curriculum that followed his interests and passions. Providing an individualised curriculum that played to his strengths and supported his weaknesses has allowed him the time to learn at his own pace and at a level suited to him - sometimes this level is far beyond his peers. He has the freedom to move whenever he likes and he has time to delve deeper into subjects he enjoys and explore topics he wants to learn more about, some of which would not be touched upon until high school, if at all, had we followed the Australian Curriculum. My son is now a happy, healthy 10 year old who engages happily with his learning and in his local community. I dread to think how different things would be if we kept him in a public school environment. My husband and I chose to home educate our other son based on these successes and have seen equally positive results from him. Our personal experience is just one example of many on how the Australian Curriculum is not a one size fits all approach to a quality education.

Secondly, I am deeply concerned about the amendment that would require home educators to prove that homeschooling is in the best interest of our children. I am horrified at the thought that some unknown (to us) government employee would be able to judge what is in the best interests of our children regarding their education. Someone who may or may not understand home education. An individual who didn't experience the tribulations of our son attending school and then watching him light back up and his anxiety fade when he began home educating in a way that suited him. Nor do I want to see the heartbreak in his eyes if I had to tell him he had to return to an education institution – a place he didn't feel safe and comfortable in. A place he couldn't be 100% himself.

As parents, my husband and I know our children's best interests, having experienced the public school system already and determined this isn't the right fit for them, especially our eldest with special needs.

Finally, I would like to address the proposed requirement to report with evidence on all 8 subject areas of the Australian Curriculum. Currently I already report on Maths, English and an additional subject each year, as well as providing a plan at the same time for the upcoming year. It is a rather lengthy and time consuming process as it is but is one I will happily do to allow my children the best quality education for them. Home Education Qld's reporting requirements are already far more rigorous than any other state requires regarding home education and contains far more information than any report card I have seen from a school setting. Being made to then report on an additional five subjects would be even more time consuming for myself as the educator, and the Home Education Unit in reading and approving the submission. Precious time which could be better spent on providing a quality education to my children.

Considering these concerns, I implore you to reconsider the proposed legislative changes to education regarding homeschooling and to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policy making that values input from ALL stakeholders and is in the best interest of ALL children.

Thank you for taking your time to read my letter and for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,
Brook Burton