

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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RE: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Provisions Bill 2024.

Dear Committee members, Education Minister, Shadow Education Minister, Premier and local members,

Parents are choosing to educate their children outside the state system in increasing numbers for various reasons. While we can appreciate that this comes with some risk for a small minority of children, I would encourage you to promote and encourage parents to further embrace the responsibility of raising and educating their children, rather than add to the regulatory burden for those who already choose to do more than the average. The additional requirements proposed, both in planning and in submission of evidence, makes life busier and more complex for parents and for HEU employees alike, with no benefit to the child/ren or community they are part of now or in the future.

The proposed legislation includes the ambiguous phrasing 'in the best interests of the child'. This sounds fantastic, but in reality, it is impossible to define and will be especially problematic when the system and parents have a different view on the best approach to education for a specific child or family. If this wording is to remain it must be specified that the authority on the 'best interests of the child' is the child's parents (unless there is a very good reason for the biological parents to be excluded from this role).

The national curriculum is still being refined and improved (and is designed to be used in the classroom, with a group of students that are of similar age) while the resources used by many homeschooling families have been tried and tested and have resulted in very successful graduates of the homeschooling community. One of the things that astounded me when we started to homeschool was how many different ways families were approaching the education of their children. It was clear that all these different methods were producing well educated, mature adults who are now busy contributing in positive ways in the community.

I am the mother of three young adults and during their school years they all spent time in school (4.5 – 7 yrs) **and** at home. We did 12 months with BSDE, but most of our time at home was with schools of distance education who supported a flexible program. We used different programs from different places depending on what was going to work best for our family at the time. My children are now young adults, two with their own babies, and it has become clear that the schools of distance ed no longer have the option to be as flexible, so HEU will be where they register to school the next generation, when the time comes.

When we started our homeschooling journey I was completely ignorant. It is a whole new world. My experience had been in the private school system in NSW and it suited me, I achieved well, came straight to Uni (QUT) as a 17 yr old, graduated from both my degree and post grad with distinction and set off into the world. My initial assumption was that we would do 'school at home' and we opted to enrol with BSDE where every detail of every lesson is dictated and where there were no planned overlaps across age levels. It almost killed us, I am not kidding. The children were all in primary school, grades 2, 4 and 6.

So, we did our research and looked at a number of different options for the following years and enrolled with Jubilee Christian College (in a program that no longer exists). We did maths and English at home and spent 2 days each week with many other families doing specialist lessons

and activities. Our family moved (for work reasons) and were not able to continue attending the activity days. I had more confidence as a homeschooling mum by this stage so we found a school of distance ed that had local area teachers with great reputations and reasonable fees and I took all responsibility for my children's learning (except reporting – my upbringing didn't allow me to let go of the 'need' for regular reports).

Our children always completed the NAPLAN tests when it was appropriate, and at least one of the kids achieved results off the top of the chart in most subjects most times!

As our eldest reached grade 10 we actively sourced work experience opportunities for her which resulted in learning about a school based traineeship (with Greencross Vets) that she applied for and was successful in being offered at our local clinic. From memory there were 15 places available across the state, approximately 3000 students applied, it was a 3 stage selection process. She then worked one day a week for 12 months, and completed a *Certificate II in Animal Studies* while comfortably managing her other grade 11 subjects. Because she was homeschooled (enrolled in distance ed) she didn't miss any timetabled classes. In her grade 12 year she specialised further and completed her *Certificate III in Dog Behaviour and Training*, alongside her grade 12 subjects and she was as qualified as she could be in her chosen field mid-way through grade 12. She has been working in this field ever since. As a 19 yr. old, she signed a contract to purchase land, and she and her husband (they married at 20 yrs. old) have since built a house.

This child was not struggling with the content in the regular school system, she was awarded academic awards most years from memory, but she absolutely excelled when she could spend time reading outside on the trampoline with a chook, or a litter of puppies, it was clear from an early age that her future would include animals. Homeschooling with flexibility gave us the opportunity to find and encourage her to put time and energy into the industry she would contribute to as an adult.

All our children were blessed to be gifted piano lessons from a grandparent, and embraced involvement in community choirs and musical productions. This was one of the many places we spent time with a wide range of other families (some who homeschooled and many who attended regular day schools). During most of the years we schooled the kids at home we were also involved in a co-op where mums and dads with particular skills shared those with all the students. The year we were enrolled with BSDE we didn't have time to scratch ourselves so there was no time or energy to spend time in a co-op or to be involved in community musicals/sports. If families who register with HEU in the future are required to use the national curriculum they will not have the time to do so many other valuable activities.

Our second child really loves learning, and has continued into adulthood actively pursuing learning. As we reached senior schooling for him we looked for a day school with passionate senior maths and science teachers. He had completed the Yr 10 advanced maths program in one term, so our son went back into the day school system halfway through year 10 on full scholarship (private school). He was appointed STEM captain, continued with music, was involved in all school sporting opportunities, he had a great time! Finishing in 2020 (covid!) with many subject awards, best allrounder and DUX. He was awarded 2 scholarships to begin university. It was wonderful to see how his enthusiasm encouraged his teachers and other students (many who did not love learning and were tired of the daily routine of school after so many years in the system). This young man is now working full time as a para planner and studying financial planning.

Each child is different and our youngest spent the least amount of time in a regular school setting. She completed prep and grade 1 in a day school before we began our journey schooling at home as a family, returning to day school halfway through grade 8 on full scholarship (with her big brother). It was clear after less than 12 months that day school was not suiting her the way it did her brother, she needed longer to process the information, and less to juggle (why so many subjects in yr 8?) While she was sad to leave the group of friends she had made, she was relieved to be able to work at her own pace at home again for Yr 10. She also had the energy for extra-curricular activities again.

Towards the end of her year 10 year we realised that other circumstances (2020) had worn us out as a family and no one was ready for year 11, so this young lady had a gap year. In her gap year she completed a *Certificate II in Hospitality* (that she had started mid year in Yr 10) at TAFE, being awarded the 'Outstanding Student Award', worked part time in hospitality and continued music study. The following year she was ready to tackle senior school, and did so successfully as a student enrolled in distance education. In Yr 11 she completed a *Certificate III in Music* and while she did Yr 12 she completed a *Kodaly certificate* in primary music education. She now has a job teaching music to 1-5yr olds in child-care centres and in community classes.

The options we had were possible because there was flexibility in the system, even through the schools of distance education. Three children are now successful young adults contributing in a positive way in the community.

If the changes in this legislation narrow the options for families as they educate their children it will prevent some of the outcomes we have seen and are enjoying.

Please remove all reference to homeschooling from the revision of this legislation. **Instead, thank the enormous community of homeschooling parents for their contribution (without remuneration) to the state, of well educated, mature, positive young adults.**

Kind Regards,

Mrs Alex Todd