


## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Dear Committee,

As a father with a vested interest in my children's education, I am writing to express my strong reservations concerning the proposed amendments to the Queensland Education Act, particularly those impacting home-schooling families.

My youngest son, diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), faced overwhelming challenges accessing education in the traditional school environment. Despite seeking early intervention support, his individual needs were neither understood, nor addressed. This resulted in a huge decline in his well-being, characterized by anxiety, depression and a complete unwillingness to participate in school-based, curriculum driven learning. The rigid structure of a conventional school setting, a multitude of suspensions for non-compliance and a lack of support proved detrimental to his progress and has impacted his functioning due to the trauma experienced.

Home education became a crucial solution thanks to the Provisional Registration period of 60 days for our family when we were left with no choice but to withdraw our son. This time allowed us the time needed to determine the impact home education on our family, financially, emotionally and determine if home learning was in the best interests of our child. We explored other education options, planned a detail learning program with the support of the Home Education's program planning options of Curriculum-based, Project-based, or goal-based learning programs and sought advice and support from allied health professionals. The learning program options are all very detailed and require huge amounts of planning, research and considerations. My wife is a primary teacher and put everything into every aspect of supporting our son's educational future and well-being.

We chose a goal-based approach to learning to allows for a flexible and personalized learning environment centred around my son's specific interests and learning style. We were able to design a program that fostered his engagement in the world around him, develops new and interesting knowledge and skills, catering to his unique needs.

We did return to a more structured schooling environment 6 months later, an Autism specific school and after 4 more years of a formal schooling with very little engagement and eventual complete school refusal, we sought an exemption from compulsory schooling. We are now provisionally registered with the Home Education Unit once more.

The proposed amendments to the Act raise significant concerns. The removal of the provisional registration period is a serious obstacle for families transitioning to home education. This period is essential for all Queensland families and what happens in other states should NOT be a reason for any of the proposed amendments. I'm concerned for the 2 in 3 home schooling students who enter home schooling without having any desire or plan to, who have a health concern or disability. This was published in a research insight paper into Home Education published by the Queensland Government in November 2022. Removing it will impact the ability for families to maintain their legal responsibilities. This period should not be part of official registration and require families to have a learning program at the time of applying. We need to consider that families may need to develop a comprehensive learning plan and access necessary resources. This does not appear to be inclusive of students with disability.

I have serious concerns with the mandating of a curriculum aligned solely with the Australian Curriculum as it appears to disregard the diverse needs of home-educated children, particularly those with learning differences like ASD. This "one-size-fits-all" approach stifles the ability to customize learning experiences and optimize each child's potential.

The proposed increase in reporting requirements for home educators seems excessive and burdensome considering how detailed and thorough the current reporting is. Home-schooling families already invest significant time and effort in developing detailed learning programs and reports, which are subject to approval by the Home Education Unit. This additional requirement will divert valuable time and resources away from core educational activities. I am not sure how the HEU will cope with reviewing twice as many reports. Schools don't provide evidence or individualised reports for each child and subject area so parents home educating shouldn't be required too either.

In conclusion, I urge a re-evaluation of the proposed amendments. Rather than imposing restrictions on home education, a focus on improving traditional schooling to cater to diverse learners would be more productive. Increased support within schools, a reduction in student-teacher ratios, and a curriculum with greater flexibility could significantly benefit all students.

I ask you to examine common sense alternatives to the proposed changes, to really engage with the home-schooling community and consider the motivations behind the lack of transparency and careful selection of facts by the department.

Home education has proven to be an effective and necessary solution for my family and countless others. I implore you to consider the needs of all children and advocate for a range of educational options that foster individual growth and success.

I appreciate your consideration of my concerns about the proposed amendments to the Education Bill.