

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

**Submission No:** 1378  
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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 that has recently been presented to parliament. As a home educating parent, I do not support some of these changes that have been introduced and I am worried about the impact that they will have on my family and the homeschooling community.

I am a mother of 4 children, 3 which have benefitted from home education in Queensland in the past 5 years, and currently still home educating my 11 year neurodivergent son. My 2 teenage homeschooled children, now aged 17 and 16 are in apprenticeships in their chosen fields while their school peers are still at school 'learning' things that have no relevance to their future.

I am a trained Teacher with a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, and currently working part-time as an Independent Disability Support Worker working with children with Autism, ADHD and other learning disabilities, mostly who also home educate. In addition, I work in both a paid and volunteer capacity assisting families with the transition to home education, with the registration process, and with social connections. Within these roles, I foresee a lot of challenges and negative impacts with the proposed changes, especially on neurodiverse families who school did not work for.

My concerns about the proposed legislation, and the main points that I do not agree will be in anyone's best interests to implement, are the following:

1. **Guiding Principles** (government overreach into the rights of parents to choose)
2. **Requiring educators to follow the Australian National Curriculum**
3. **Increased reporting expectations to demonstrate educational progress**

#### **Guiding Principles:**

Homeschooling families in Queensland have a myriad of reasons why they choose to home educate. It is our right as parents to educate our children as we see fit, according to our family values or our children's learning needs. It is not up to a government system to ascertain whether home education is 'in the best interest of our child' – that is OUR right as parents. They are our children, and we know them better than any system ever could. It is a grave overreach of the government to even suggest that we need to 'prove' why we should home educate. Is there a test for ascertaining whether a school is the right place for a child? Because for MANY it is not – for many, school has been a place of trauma, bullying, anxiety and struggle. For so many families, mainstream school is far from a 'suitable' environment for learning. I maintain that this decision should never be made by a government agency that doesn't know your child from the next one.

#### **Australian National Curriculum:**

I believe that imposing the Australian National Curriculum on homeschooling families would be counterproductive and would only serve to exacerbate the issues of children falling through the gaps in the traditional education system. Homeschooling provides a unique opportunity to address these gaps by tailoring education to the individual needs of each child and fostering a supportive learning environment that promotes academic success and personal growth.

My youngest son has Autism level 2, ADHD and a PDA profile. With these learning challenges, he needs to be interested in a topic for his brain to engage in learning. When he is interested in a topic, there is no stopping the depths of research and engagement he can go to! He also requires a lot of autonomy in his learning and day to day life, to feel calm and regulated. The flexibility given to us as homeschoolers means that he can learn in a manner that aligns with his individual

interests, abilities, and learning styles, and that we can deep dive into the things he enjoys and that captures his curiosity. One example of this was when we were watching a TV program set in medieval times. He and I were both interested in learning more - and did so in fun and exciting ways by watching documentaries, building a castle model, and going on an excursion to the Abbey Medieval Museum where he learnt about the weapons by holding and wearing them! If a mandated curriculum was imposed, we would not have had time for these explorations and instead may have had to learn about a country/history that isn't relevant to him at this time. By mandating the Australian curriculum, these proposed changes would impede my son's autonomy, curiosity and creativity and hinder his ability to pursue education in a way that best suits his needs.

Furthermore, the Australian Curriculum is designed for classroom teaching, not for small groups or families of multiple ages. We, along with many other homeschoolers, choose to learn in small learning pods with multiple ages, engaging community expertise, shared excursions and collaborative projects. I have found it advantageous that my son learns with different ages, as it also encourages him to either take a leadership role with younger children or ask more in depth questions and engage in deeper discussions with older children. These rich learning opportunities would not be possible if we had to follow the curriculum according to his age.

I am also alarmed of the detriment this imposition might have on some families. Being a firsthand witness as both a homeschooling advocate and a support worker to some children who have a 'complete shut-down to school-like learning' (mostly due to school trauma, anxiety and overwhelm at the pace or content of the Australian Curriculum), I have seen the light come back into their eyes, I have seen them slowly over time come out of their shell and grow in confidence and ability with a completely different approach to life and learning. I can't tell you the benefit - and absolute need - for there to be flexible options and for parents to be able to guide their child's learning according to their needs and interests.

I'm also a parent who had a child in complete shut-down from school, who was mentally scarred from and thought he was dumb, who completely disengaged from learning and who took a few years to recover and rediscover learning in his own way. This child then got himself an electrical apprenticeship at 15 and is currently thriving! He has only 1 year until he's a fully qualified electrician (with plans to go to the mines for a few years to save big) while if he was at school until Year 12, he would only be starting now. As this parent, I can tell you the Australian Curriculum wasn't driving my child. He was bored and didn't care about the content - he needed to have a reason and a personal interest to learn something. My child even refused to learn trigonometry, yet when it came up in his TAFE studies, he was able to get in and do it because he has a reason to learn it now.

For homeschooling families, the national curriculum represents a yoke that threatens to stifle the boundless potential of our children. We aspire for more—more creativity, more depth, more relevance, and more individualisation tailored to the unique strengths and interests of each child. We embrace the opportunity to provide a personalized, holistic education that aligns with our children's unique needs, interests, and learning styles. Through personalised learning, we have witnessed our children excel academically, develop essential life skills, and reclaim their confidence and sense of self-worth. This approach fosters a love of learning, encourages critical thinking, and nurtures individual talents and passions – and this is what makes for the innovative leaders of our future!

#### **Increased reporting expectations:**

We already provide a detailed plan and report to the Home Education Unit yearly about our homeschooling progress. The proposed change to require in depth reporting on all subjects in the national curriculum is asking of homeschoolers far more than is recorded in schools! Even schools do not have to provide progress notes on anything! We already report extensively, this new change

does nothing but take us away from time with our children and families. In addition, recent changes to HEU processes (2022) indicates that only 10% of reports are being reviewed, meaning we could do all that extra time away from our children for no reason at all! I urge the committee to rethink this proposition and see that we are already demonstrating the quality learning in our homes from our already-detailed annual reports.

As a mother of a neurodivergent child, it is disheartening to see a focus on making homeschooling more rigid rather than addressing the systemic barriers that prevent many children with disabilities from accessing quality education in mainstream schools. Instead of imposing restrictive measures on homeschooling families, the committee's efforts would be better directed towards making mainstream schools more accessible and inclusive for all students, regardless of their abilities or differences. Children with disabilities often face significant challenges in traditional school settings, where rigid structures and standardized approaches may not accommodate their diverse needs. Homeschooling provides a lifeline for these children, offering the flexibility and personalised support they require to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment.

Moreover, I am worried about the lack of transparency and public consultation surrounding these changes. As a stakeholder in our education system, I believe it is imperative for the voices of educators, parents, students, and community members to be heard and considered in any decision-making process that impacts our education system. It is apparent that only a select few businesses (that stand to gain from following the Australian Curriculum) were consulted, while individuals (specifically Amanda Bartle and Patricia Fitzgerald) who are unbiased and stand for the majority of the homeschooling community were actively excluded. This desperately highlights the need for an official (paid) state homeschooling association. It is also apparent that up to 40% of registered homeschooling families were not even informed of these proposed changes in email at all. This whole process has been biased and one-sided, and in no way should a decision of this magnitude be made without consulting – and listening to – those it impacts the most.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns. I look forward to your response and to further dialogue on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Natalie Mardon