

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1381
Submitted by: Jason Gor
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Submission

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

I am a father who has been involved in home educating our three children from before they were school aged. It has been one of the great joys of my life to be involved with our children in teaching them and learning together. This has ranged from the early years of learning (eg learning to read) to years 11 and 12 maths, history and technology based subjects (such as basic programming, fitting new parts into a PC etc). Seeing our children introduced to a wide range of areas of learning, and then seeing them grow as they develop in their areas of interest, such as 3D computer drafting, drama, novel writing, running a small business and Napoleonic era history is a fantastic experience.

My concerns with the draft bill are as follows:

The bill was drafted with only token consultation with actual homeschoolers and their representatives. This has led to what seems like an unnecessarily adversarial relationship between the Department of Education and homeschoolers. Simply including homeschooling parents in genuinely resolving issues would be far preferable!

Following the above point. It is not clear what actual issues this bill is attempting to deal with. What are the problems it is trying to solve? Since the bill has been released to the public and opened to a round of submissions it has gradually emerged that child safety issues seem to be part of the catalyst to the bill being drafted - but we are left guessing how much this is the case.

If child safety is a major concern then the proposed changes in curriculum requirements, especially in years 11 and 12, are irrelevant. Focussing on the HEU registration process could be relevant and checking across government departments (eg Child Safety) for "high risk" families could reduce risk to some children. However, the current wording in the bill is so broad that it allows for seemingly arbitrary judgements of "the best interests of the child".

The proposed curriculum in the bill does not take into account reality in homeschooling. ACARA and QCAA are all based around non-individualised schooling, with students meeting certain benchmarks at certain ages. From our own lived experience as a family, one son was, until about nine, unable to read, but advanced in maths, history and general knowledge. He learned by discussion, not by reading. Once he could read (at about nine years old) he proceeded to enjoy reading history and other non-fiction books at an adult reading level. Since then he has excelled at university subjects (available through Headstart programs) in years 11 and 12, receiving one distinction and three high distinctions. A major reason we homeschool is to provide individualised learning which matches our children's interests and abilities. The current bill as drafted seems oblivious (or uncaring) towards this major aspect of home education. This adds to the adversarial "feel" of the bill.

At a minimum, I would request that the bill go through another round of consultation while genuinely including representatives of the homeschooling community.

Regards,
Jason Gor