

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in homeschooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. As a homeschooling parent, I firmly believe that these changes would undermine the very reasons why many families, including mine, have chosen homeschooling as the preferred mode of education for our children. The essence of homeschooling lies in the freedom it allows children to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. I have four children, two of which are homeschooled, aged 10 and 9. We commenced our schooling journey through Distance Education. For the first three years we enjoyed a curriculum that allowed for flexibility and individuality, however the school then changed curriculums, meeting the Australian Curriculum criteria. As I also had two children under the age of five, our days soon became hectic trying to complete the increase of school work, much of which was of no interest to my children, whilst attempting to maintain social and extracurricular activities. My children's work became very rushed as quantity soon surpassed quality. When my 9 year old was in year 1, she could not cope with the lengthy amount of mundane work that was of no interest to her and would be in tears daily. Her reading and writing was progressing slower than children her age and it seemed like we were always playing catch up to get all of her work submitted. English and Math would take twice as long and we would end up rushing her work to tick all of the boxes. Concerned that my child has dyslexia, we were on the waiting list for an assessment for a diagnosis. In the meantime I had arranged for meetings with the school to adapt her curriculum to suit her. During this meeting I explained the need for my daughter to have more time learning the foundations of English and Math. As she needed more time to cement certain concepts, I made the decision to omit certain work from her curriculum which I deemed irrelevant, either because I knew it was something she already had an understanding of, or because I didn't feel it was as important as English and Math, such as dribbling a basketball for 20 seconds. Unfortunately I was told that I wouldn't be able to adapt the curriculum without a diagnosis. Why are we expecting children to keep up with others academically when we wouldn't expect that from those who struggle in a running race? After two years of attempting to make this curriculum work, I realised it just didn't suit our family or my children's learning styles and was making us all miserable. I was tired of seeing my cheerful daughter anxious every day. The sheer volume of content within the curriculum felt overwhelming and arbitrary, making it difficult for my children to see the relevance and meaning behind what they learned. This resulted in a loss of motivation and enthusiasm for learning, which ultimately hindered their academic progress and personal development. We registered with HEU and sourced a curriculum that suited the learning styles of my children. My daughter repeated year 2 English with this new curriculum, whilst completing year 3 for her other subjects. She completed it within 6 months, completed year 3 English in 8 months and has nearly finished term 1 of year 4. It was also very interesting to note the outcome of my daughter's assessment for dyslexia. She passed the assessment, however I was told that she definitely has weaknesses with reading and writing. After consulting with the specialists they said she was an interesting case because I homeschooled and spent one on one time with her, adapting the curriculum to prioritise areas of learning tailored to her learning style. They said that if she was in a school setting there was a good chance she would not have passed the assessment and to continue to do what I was doing – which was omitting school work I deemed as unnecessary, to allow for more time to grasp the concepts she was struggling with and spend time following her passion and interest. Furthermore, enforcing a standardized curriculum fails to recognize the diverse interests and talents of homeschooling students. It overlooks the fact that every child is

unique and may thrive in different subject areas or learning environments. My eldest has an interest in cooking. She has spent so much time with me in the kitchen that she is now making curries, bread, soups, and many more recipes independently. Both my 10 and 9 year old have also learned how to sew, and have a hobby business, selling custom made cushions, head bands, scrunchies and personalized bracelets. By imposing rigid educational requirements, we risk depriving our children of the opportunity to pursue their passions and develop their full potential. In essence, these proposed changes would not only undermine the fundamental principles of homeschooling but also limit my children's ability to learn and grow in a way that honours their individuality and creativity. As a homeschooling parent deeply invested in my children's education, I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and instead focus on supporting families in providing a rich and diverse educational experience tailored to the needs of each child. Thank you for considering my concerns. Sincerely, Educational Advocate/Homeschooling Parent