

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1390
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Di Farmer MP and Committee Members,

I am writing to share my disappointment and concern regarding the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation, specifically restricting homeschooling families to the Australian Curriculum. As both a homeschooling parent and qualified teacher, I strongly believe that parents should have the freedom to choose the educational approach that best suits their children. Home education provides incredible opportunities to tailor our children's education, customising learning materials and approaches based on their evolving, needs and interests. It allows for a customised and enriching education with real life experiences, that extend far beyond the limitations of a standardised curriculum. Through hands-on learning, volunteer work, excursions, and entrepreneurial ventures, our children have the chance to thrive in ways that are simply not possible without flexibility and autonomy, which will not be afforded in the confines of the Australian Curriculum.

Imposing rigid curriculum requirements not only limits opportunities, it would be detrimental to the holistic development and overall wellbeing of our children. It risks disengaging children, stifling their curiosity, enthusiasm, creativity and innovation. If we are to prepare children for the future, if we value academic excellence and want to bestow our children with higher education, and the opportunity for innovation or entrepreneurial ventures, readying them for a world that will look vastly different than it does now, with jobs that do not yet exist, we need them to value lifelong learning. We need to have them engaged and taking ownership of their learning and for their learning to be meaningful to them. They need to learn how to think critically, not regurgitate content.

In addition, teaching to the Australian Curriculum and then also reporting on each subject would be onerous at best, burdening families with an extensive workload, detracting from the time and resources available for meaningful educational experiences. And it is important to note that many children who homeschool have often left mainstream schooling in order to improve their health and wellbeing. It is also important to recognise, that should home educating families seek guidance, the Australian Curriculum is there for them to use, either as a resource to pull from, or to follow if they require more guidance.

Finally, from personal experience with transitioning to homeschooling, I have noticed a remarkable improvement in my child's happiness, confidence and enthusiasm for learning, though we still have a long way to go. I still need to be very creative, thoughtful, purposeful and delicate in the delivery of their education because of their complete disengagement from learning, due to their time at school. I have to continue to bring them back, to take off all the pressure so they feel safe to engage, to finally become motivated again.

I believe it would be detrimental to the health and wellbeing and overall development of all homeschooling children and families, to go through all the work required to reignite their curiosity and love of learning, to then have that be taken away again, with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, in the false name of quality education and child safety. I don't want to have to deny my children varied and various learning opportunities in a multitude of subject areas, due to the need to follow a grade level rigid plan. We want learning to be authentic and organic, not on someone else's timeline, especially when they have no idea who our children are, and therefore cannot possibly know what is in their best interest.

I urge you to reconsider this proposal and instead, act in consultation with families and the very children this involves. Hear their perspective, recognise that there are many ways to learn and while we agree that quality education is indeed paramount, following the Australian Curriculum is not going to ensure quality education at all. Let us work together to ensure that every child has access to an education that is going to support THEM.

Nicole Nightingale