

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

**Submission No:** 1406  
**Submitted by:** Kim Davies  
**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public  
**Attachments:** No attachment

### Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in home schooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. I am a qualified Prep to Year 12 teacher and have taught in schools in both Victoria and Queensland. I am also a parent that home schools. I did send my child to mainstream school initially, however, this choice was clearly unsuitable for my child. As a single parent, home schooling my child meant a massive financial sacrifice, but one that was necessary for my child's social, emotional and educational wellbeing. The essence of home schooling, which is a valuable and required alternative to a school-based education, lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with individual needs, interests, skills, abilities, and learning styles. I recognise that the Australian National Curriculum is available to all and a small number of home school families draw upon it as suits their own children's learning needs. However, to remove choices for families only diminishes opportunities to foster diversity and inclusion. My significant concern is that by imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes will force some children back into the mainstream school system resulting in worsened social, emotional and educational wellbeing rather than improved outcomes for children and society as intended. From my perspective, the best interest of children is likely to be served by maintaining real and distinct options for children and families, as well as providing support to families who choose to home school that is substantial, considered and informed by the home educating community. There are many families like myself who have taken major financial sacrifices to educate their children according to their needs and best interests. In addition to this sacrifice we also take on full financial responsibility of the cost involved in providing education at home. Greater support is required for families and could be provided through a range of programs that currently exist, for example, there is a program that provides Distance Education students with free refurbished computers/laptops, this kind of offer should be extended to students enrolled with the Home Education Unit as well. There could also be provisions made for home schooling students to have free access to essential software programs such as Microsoft Office and Adobe for all applications including PC/MAC and Android users. A common concern among those who do not understand home schooling is that students will 'miss out' on social interactions. While this is not true, greater affordability could be accessed through the current Fair Play Voucher system where it could be made that registered home schooling children could have access to 2 Fair Play Vouchers per child. This could mean that they could have access to a chosen activity and use the second voucher to provide swimming lessons (an example of which would be provided for free in a mainstream school). These are just some helpful ways that home schooling families could be supported instead of having additional burdens placed upon them. The planning and reporting requirements for HEU registration far exceed that which is provided in a mainstream setting. For example, my planning required for approval is a document that is 12 pages long that extensively outlines what my child will learn, how he will learn it, what I will be doing to support his learning, the resources we will need and how they will be provided, which social activities he will be participating in and details of any learning considerations and how they will be addressed. Then there is the end of year report where all this information is reflected upon with annotated examples of work that highlights how my child has been supported and what educational gains my child has made. This report is also another 12 pages long and far exceeds any feedback given by a school over the whole of the learning year. Removing the HEU certificate and replacing it with a notice diminishes the formal recognition and authenticity. Certificates carry weight and credibility, while a mere notice lacks the same level of legitimacy and may not be perceived as

equally valuable or official. In the two and a half years that my child attended mainstream school, the feedback received equated to no more than two pages of pre-curated statements that demonstrated no understanding of my child, their learning or learning needs. Home education is an expensive and labour-intensive undertaking. Financial impacts on families due to the decision to home educate are large: approximately 90% of families report an impact, with about 70% reporting a moderate to high financial impact (Home Education Network, 2023a). This is in addition to significant impacts on career trajectory for the primary educator (most often the mother). In light of these statistics, it is clear that home education is only ever undertaken in the best interests of the child. Therefore, in modifying the legislation to address child safety concerns in addition to mandating a standardised curriculum raises significant issues. Such changes will not effectively address safety concerns and instead provides ambiguous loop holes for external stakeholders (such as mainstream schools wanting to keep specific funding allocated to a child) to manipulate a system and families under the guise of concern referencing the 'best interests of the child'. Supportive, collaborative regulation results in better and increased compliance, and a better experience for home educating families and regulators alike. I fully support the recommendations from the Home Education Network. From all stand points, as a teacher familiar with the Victorian and Queensland education system, as someone educated in working with a wide range of learning considerations and special needs, as a parent and as a home schooling family – these current proposed changes will be detrimental. I strongly urge that you reconsider this Bill and take into account the recommendations made by the Home Education Network as outlined below. The Home Education Network's recommendations for the legislation review are: 1. That reference to the Australian Curriculum be removed from the draft legislation, and replaced with covering the eight key learning areas, which will bring the legislation in line with the majority of other Australian jurisdictions; 2. That reference to a 'high quality education' be removed from the draft legislation; 3. That provisional registration is maintained, and that the time frames unchanged from current regulations; 4. That reference to 'best interests of the child' be removed from the draft legislation; 5. That a parent representative body similar to VHEAC in Victoria be formed so that Queensland home educators are able to collaborate with the HEU and Department of Education to formulate a workable and realistic legislative and regulatory framework. Thank you for your time in considering my concerns. I would be happy to discuss them with you and any of my experiences in relation to this matter. Kind regards, Kim Davies