

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1474
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RE: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to inform you that I strongly object to the proposed changes to home-schooling requirements in Queensland. I say this for three reasons:

- 1) my own experience of having been home schooled,
- 2) my belief that education is primarily parents' responsibility, not that of the government of the day, and
- 3) my belief that enforcing a standardised, National Curriculum on all Australian children, whilst this may have its benefits, is a flawed model of education.

Having been home schooled myself from Grades 7 through 10, I know first-hand the amazing benefits of this age-old form of education. In my adult years, I have often reflected on what a wonderful experience it was for me to be home schooled and to spend time learning and growing with my siblings and parents and I shudder to think what life would have been like had I been left in the mainstream school system. When I returned to public highschool to complete Grades 11 and 12, I was ahead of my peers in most subjects. I went on to be valedictorian at my Year 12 graduation, to achieve an OP (Overall Position, as it was then) of 3, to complete a university degree in Occupational Therapy and to work in that field...all without adherence, in my five years at home, to any standard, government-appointed curriculum. My parents can be well proud of their efforts in home schooling me and my siblings and I will be forever grateful that they chose to pull us out of state schooling.

As a parent, I believe it is primarily my and my husband's duty to nurture and educate our children. We take that responsibility very seriously. We did not have children for them to be raised by the State. Consequently, I am very concerned by the government overreach which is being proposed in this bill. In the two years that my husband and I home schooled our children, we sought to give them not only an academic education but also a deep understanding of the value of every human life and an appreciation of and respect for the physical and spiritual world in which they live. We have instilled in our children a moral grounding that cannot be imparted in any school. Neither can it be achieved simply by pouring "knowledge" into a child's mind via the National Curriculum. A solid moral grounding is what every child in Australia needs far more than a head full of facts and figures that government officials have decided should be taught in schools. The home schooling parents we have had the pleasure of knowing over the years realise this all too well and they have chosen to home school in order to instil in their children their family values of hard work, an inquiring mind, kindness, fairness, working together and so many others. I fear that the Queensland Education Minister and all involved in the introduction of this Bill wish to take away the rights of parents to raise their children in harmony with their own family's values and culture. I am also very concerned that if home schooling families are forced to adhere to the Australian Curriculum and to meet more extensive reporting requirements, this will place undue stress and an unnecessary burden on both parents and the Home Education Unit.

This bill proposes to "modernise and improve education services by...acknowledging well-being, inclusion and diversity". I would assert that student well-being, inclusion and diversity cannot be achieved by the changes proposed in this bill. Burdening parents who

wish to home school with additional regulatory requirements and enforcing the use of a standardised, national curriculum with all Australian children will certainly not improve the well-being of our nation's children, nor will it ensure inclusion and diversity.

Home schooling (as it stands at present, with freedom to choose curriculum and modes of learning) is the epitome of diversity, inclusion and wellness. It allows children to follow their hearts and to pursue their innate interests. It allows children who are struggling to slow down to a pace at which they can learn one concept before moving on to another. It also allows children to thrive in pursuits to which they are naturally drawn and which mainstream school may not provide. For some students, home schooling provides the opportunity to become highly skilled in the areas of their choice at an earlier age than if they were at school. There is such a vast array of cultures, interests and abilities within home schooling communities that the children in them have regular opportunities to express and observe differences, to appreciate one another's strengths, and to learn from their interactions that everyone is unique yet of equal value. In fact, I have found that ensuring their children's wellbeing, embracing diversity and wanting to show and receive inclusion are the very reasons for which many parents choose to home school their children. Placing a requirement on home schooling families to adhere to the Australian Curriculum will only serve to stifle the gifts and abilities of the children in these communities, to limit their parents'/carers' ability to tailor curriculum to the needs of their children, to limit children's capacity to learn independently and to limit home schooled children's opportunities to pursue their innate and developing interests.

Home schooling is a fantastic training ground for adulthood. It is an environment in which responsible, talented, caring young people are raised by parents who care enough to put their own ambitions aside for the betterment of their children and society at large. Please do not place home schooling families under further pressure to conform to a one-size-fits-all curriculum or meet burdensome regulatory requirements. I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the proposed changes to home schooling legislation and to engage in a collaborative dialogue with home schooling stakeholders. I ask you to work towards a more inclusive and responsive educational system that respects the choices and concerns of all families.

Thankyou for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Shannon Bestmann