


Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in Queensland, several of which I believe would be to the detriment of home educated students if the bill was to be passed in its current form. While my concerns with the proposed changes are numerous, in this submission I wish to specifically address the changes to s217 proposed in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The proposed changes to s217(1)(b)(ii) dictate that the educational program used for the child's home education must be consistent with an approved education and training program. Proposed s217(3)(a) provides that an approved education and training program means (for the primary years) the national curriculum developed by ACARA.

I am a mother of four children, the oldest of whom is school aged and was registered for home education with the Home Education Unit (HEU) in 2023. The decision to home educate is not one that my husband and I have taken up on a whim, because of a "trend", or as an easy alternative. I hold two bachelor's degrees, while my husband holds two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree, and a graduate certificate. I mention this not because I think that higher education qualifications are necessary to provide your children with a high-quality education (they are not), but rather to demonstrate that we are highly educated members of society and we have made a very conscious choice to educate our children this way; sacrificing my career and income to provide what we unreservedly believe to be the best option for our children: to provide them with a rigorous education in the home environment using a mix of high-quality curricula that have been carefully researched and selected to best suit the individual child.

To state with unequivocal clarity: I do not follow the national curriculum, and I have no wish to do so in the future. I firmly believe that I can provide a high-quality education for

my children without it – indeed I believe that I can provide a HIGHER quality education without it by focusing on meaningful progress rather than checkboxes; with flexibility to accelerate or delay learning areas or topics in a manner that suits my child; by using resources that align with our family’s values and educational philosophy without concern that they do not neatly align with national curriculum requirements. I, along with the majority of the Queensland home schooling community, strongly reject the definition of a high-quality education being connected explicitly and exclusively to the national curriculum. The national curriculum does not serve as a guide for excellence, but rather operates as a minimum standard document for knowledge that is expected to be presented in a school classroom environment. It is readily available for any home educator who wishes to refer to it but, as was highlighted during the briefing that took place on Monday 18th March, a staggering 80% of registered home schoolers do not use it. On this note, I would encourage the committee to query the contextual details of the 20% that it was stated do “follow” the national curriculum as I believe that on closer examination of the data one would find the actual proportion is even smaller.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the current requirements to maintain registration with the HEU. The HEU prescribe that a “high-quality” education must be delivered. Upon registration, and annually thereafter, I am obliged to provide an annual learning plan, in which I provide in depth detail about what will be taught, how it will be taught, how progress will be measured, and what resources will be used. The acceptance of this plan constitutes an acceptance by the HEU that I have planned sufficiently to provide my child with a high-quality education. 10 months after initial registration, and annually thereafter, I am also required to submit a report on the educational progress that has been made in the last year for maths, english, and one other learning area. This requires the submission of work samples as well as a narrative regarding progress. This is submitted concurrently with the plan for the following year. Again, the HEU has opportunity at this point to communicate if the program being implemented is not of sufficient quality. Accepting the report and plan, and allowing continued registration constitutes an acceptance that a high-quality education has been provided for the child. What is the point of tying the definition of a high-quality education to a single curriculum (particularly one that is specifically designed for

schools) when performance data published by the HEU shows that the vast majority of home educators are providing adequate proof and plans year after year that are already deemed to be facilitating the provision of a high-quality education?

The proposed changes indicate that reporting would be required for ALL learning areas, of which the national curriculum has 8. This would mean a massive increase in administration for home educators, as well as what would likely be an unmanageable burden on the HEU to ensure that quality is indeed being upheld. How will this be managed? Will all the reports and plans be read? Furthermore, it is well established that there remains a large percentage of home schoolers that are unregistered. The onerous increase in administrative tasks that would result from employing the national curriculum is likely to further disengage the unregistered community, disincentivise registration and drive the proportion of unregistered home schoolers even higher. Also worth consideration is the financial disadvantage to families who have invested in curricula that suit their child, but do not easily align with the national curriculum.

With the exception of the proposed changes for section 229A(1) to raise the maximum age for registration to 18 years, I ask the committee to table that all items referencing home education be removed from the bill, and encourage the Department of Education to actually undertake rigorous and genuine consultation with the home schooling community.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.