

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1508
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Minister Farmer, RE: Proposed changes to homeschooling These are excerpts from various sources that resonate with my feelings regarding the proposed changes. I haven't seen anything in the news, haven't received any letters, no communication from the HSU - why has the homeschool community been entirely excluded not only from the consultation process, but also from even finding out about these major changes that are proposed to heavily impact our homeschooling? I found out about these changes on social media, I find it entirely inappropriate, insulting and inept that there has been ZERO communication with the only people that the proposed changes will have effect on. As you should be aware, QLD has no official state home schooling association. We do however have extensive well networked online communities – to which a call for representation should have been made. Likewise the Department has the details of 10 000 or more, home educating children's families. The people who I feel most represent me (e.g. Amanda Bartle, and Patricia Fitzgerald) were not invited to participate. I do have a section pointing out that 300 parents participating in the "extensive research" those diminutive numbers in no way represent the home education community. In the briefing she said 500 for the research was inadequate but 300 was considered enough for consultation! For a population of 10,000 you would need a minimum sample size of 370 for a 5 percent margin of error, and around 1,900 for a margin of error of 2%. A sample size of 300 is not adequate as anything under a 5 percent margin of error is not generally accepted as reliable research. Please outline:

- How your department identified who to involve in 'representative consultation'?
- Was a broader call for possible participants sent to registered home educators?
- Why were businesses possible participants, but a 'roundtable' of home educating parents were not?
- Given the high level of evidence based criticism against the proposed changes, how can you be confident that consultation was indeed adequate?
- The Department recently emailed registered home educators to advise them of the changes and direct them to the Committee for a submission. However, many people did not receive this email. Please investigate a possible flaw in the emailing process as I did not receive such correspondence.

Donna Stewart from simply homeschool, has been actively communicating with us the entire way though. She says (quote "I am totally on the side of homeschoolers having autonomy from government overreach. I think we shouldn't even have to show progress etc. It's a parents right to choose how they educate their children and we will fight for this right all the way." Unquote). Many home educating parents (approx. 500 according to the Department website) responded to a survey as part of the first round of consultation. Of these can you please advise:

- How many agreed with the suggestion to connect the definition of High Quality Education to ACARA?
- Contextual details of the 20 % who use the Australian Curriculum (AC). What percentage of these are early home educators who use a third party to help design plans? Do people typically start with the AC, then move to other options as they gain confidence – or realise it is not working. Of the 20% how many identify as neurodiverse? Put differently, some greater contextual detail on these figures would allow a better understanding of the ways that home educators engage with the AC. Home educators currently meet a standard that involves setting annual work plans (with example templates provided by the HEU, along with guidelines of what a High Quality Education involves) and providing an annual report. Please advise:
- the evidence you have that this existing system is not leading to a High Quality Education for home educated children.
- The evidence you have that changing it will lead to better outcomes Several families as their children get older use university courses (e.g. through Open Universities) as part of their curriculum, with obvious advantages for entry into tertiary study (and getting a head start on their degrees).
- If your Department intended

to prevent university level study for registered home educators? Many Australian families choose education like Steiner, Montessori or independent schools like the Pine Community School, or 'Forest Schools' • Will this legislation give home educators the same level of choice as other QLD families?

- Montessori for instance is not identified as a 'recognised alternative' on ACARA's special site, does this mean home educating families cannot follow a Montessori curriculum when other Qld kids can?

- Further the curriculums for Steiner registered with ACARA have been modified for a school setting. There are however options for Steiner curriculums that have been designed for a home setting. Is the intention of the Bill to exclude these from use? We chose to homeschool for various reasons and these proposed changes take away choices for families like us who need to exit the schooling system due to bullying and harassment from teaching staff. There are such diverse needs among children that require a choice of quality education that the QLD curriculum does not fit every child.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritize the best interests of our students, teachers, and schools. I implore you to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policymaking that values input from all stakeholders and ensures the integrity and quality of our education system. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns. I look forward to your response and to further dialogue on this important issue. Regards [REDACTED] Homeschooled Homeschooling mother of 6.