

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1524
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Dear EGPA Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in our state. As a constituent and a member of the community, I believe it is crucial to voice my apprehensions about the potential impact of these changes on our education system.

I am a homeschooling parent of a year 2 student. We have been homeschooling for nearly a year and I have two, soon to be three, younger children that I also plan to homeschool. My eldest child attended a private school in our local area for all of Prep and half of Year 1 before we decided to start home education. Prior to this, I was a qualified Chartered Accountant with both public and private work experience, including a top tier accounting firm and a local council. I graduated from the Queensland University of Technology in 2012 with a Bachelor of Business (Major in Accounting and Extended Major in Professional Accounting) and achieved a GPA of 7.0 in this program. I am also a homeschool graduate, having been educated at home since the middle of year 6.

The proposed changes under the *Education General Provisions and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024* raises several pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed.

Firstly, I am concerned with the requirement to align home education to the Australian Curriculum under the assumption that current home education does not provide access to a high quality education. As a parent, I have the option to use this curriculum both at home or by sending my children to school and I have chosen against this. One of the primary benefits of home education is the ability to tailor the education program specifically to the style and interests of the child. As a homeschooling parent, I have access to choose from the best resources and curricula across the world, and aligning to the Australian curriculum removes this choice and limits and/or reduces the quality of education I can provide for my children. I understand that this could allow for more streamlined governance processes around homeschooling, but it does not follow that this is in the best interest of the child or will achieve the purposes of a high quality education. It stifles the ability to follow natural interests and deep dive into topics, it eliminates the ability to participate in multi-age level learning and it is prescriptive instead of encouraging independence, a love of learning and flexibility to take advantage of natural learning opportunities as they arise. I am concerned that this requirement is targeting economies of scale, efficiency and standardisation at the expense of the best quality education for the child. These may be valuable and worthy goals in a school setting where there are many children to educate but most homeschooling families have opted for this method of education to overcome those exact limitations.

My second concern is around who and how the determination is made that home education is in the best interests of the child. Is there an assumption that the parent's determination is insufficient? It is certainly much easier and often financially viable to send children to school rather than undertaking that responsibility at home. Consequently, the choice to do so already demonstrates that parents have determined this to be in the best interest of their child/ren. Any further requirement is government overreach and not only challenges my rights as a parent but also

undermines the decision I have already made based on my personal, direct, intimate knowledge of my children and family. I challenge the idea that anyone could have a higher vested interest in my children or make a better, more informed determination.

Lastly and more generally, I am concerned about the lack of transparency and public consultation surrounding these changes. I would encourage the committee to be clear and transparent around the outcomes targeted by these reforms and why the current system is failing to achieve these outcomes for homeschooled children. I would encourage extensive consultation with those impacted as there is overwhelming anecdotal evidence that supports how beneficial home education is for children. I don't believe this is currently an area that is well understood and appreciated. As a stakeholder in our education system, I believe it is imperative for the voices of educators, parents, students, and community members to be heard and considered in any decision-making process.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritise 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.

Sincerely,

Karen Lucas