


Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: 
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am opposed to the changes outlined in the Educational Law amendment currently being reviewed.

My concerns are as follows:

1. Being forced to follow the Australian curriculum will decrease engagement in learning for homeschooled students.
2. Increased red tape will add stress to families who choose homeschooling.
3. It is inappropriate for the government to expect proof of homeschooling to be 'in a child's best interests'.

ACARA and the National Curriculum

Consistently academics and researchers have shown that people (not just children) learn best when they engage in deep and thorough investigation of topics that interest them. Experts are made by doing deep dive learning into one or two subjects. Where ACARA asks children to skim the surface of 8 learning areas, on the contrary we know that focusing on one area or interest leads to better understanding and deeper learning. Homeschooling offers children the ability to learn and understand topics of their choice. My children are very engaged and enjoy homeschooling because they are learning everyday about things that interest them.

Increased Red Tape

The biggest thing we know to be true about learning and teaching is that it requires interaction between both a teacher (parent educator in the instance of homeschooling) and the learner. We know this to be key which is why the discussion of class sizes and teacher/student ratios is always at the forefront of the debate when we discuss quality education. By increasing the reporting requirements for parents we are taking away from these high quality one on one interactions. Parents are already taking considerable time from their other commitments to prepare a yearly report to meet the current requirements of Home Education registration.

Increasing the paperwork load with an expectation to report on and provide evidence for all learning areas within the National Curriculum will have a direct negative impact on the amount of time parents have available to engage in the high quality interactions with their children we know are key to learning.

In a Child's Best Interest

Simply put it is inappropriate to have this statement within an Education Law relating to homeschoolers.

While of course I agree with the statement my concern lies with who will be the judge of 'best interests'. This also suggests that currently the accepted 'best interests' of the child would be in sending them to school for 6 hours a day to be taught by strangers. If the government was expected to show proof that attending a state school was in the individual best interests of each child in order for their enrolment to continue we would have thousands of school leavers.

Examples of things happening in schools (to my own children) that are not in the child's best interest:

My oldest son likes to be called by his name, not a shortened version of name. When he brought this to the attention of his teacher this was the response he got. "There are too many students for me to remember what everyone wants to be called". This interaction really brought down my son's self esteem and confidence because a teacher refused to acknowledge his request to simply be called by his name.

My second oldest son suffers from constipation and IBS. When enrolled he was constantly asking to go to the toilet and sometimes he would have to spend a great deal of time in the toilet. One day the teacher refused to let him go to the toilet because she did not believe he needed to go and he wet his pants in front of the class. I had already emailed the teacher a week earlier about this issue and provided a Dr certificate. I also asked the teacher to allow him to go to the toilet as needed while we worked with the dr to find a solution. This experience was very embarrassing for my son and he was teased by his peers for wetting his pants, he was called names and picked on because of this.

My oldest son was bullied constantly by another student and nothing was ever done about. It got to the point that a teacher had to physically restrain this other child so my son could get away from him. My son's teacher looked at me and said "I'm so sorry I don't know what to do anymore I keep reporting these issues and it's falling on deaf ears". Once again this affected my son's confidence and self esteem and he did not feel supported at school.

These negative experiences which, are just a drop in the ocean of the stories we have personally experienced or have heard related to people's school experiences, have left trauma that certainly cannot be construed as 'in my best interests'.

In conclusion, if the government wants to improve learning outcomes for Queenslanders and support Queenslanders to access a high quality education we should be removing red tape and increasing support for highly motivated and invested parent educators who want the best outcomes for their children. No one makes the life altering decision to home educate if they don't believe this will be in the best interests of their child and their family. We should also be doing an overhaul of our overcrowded curriculum and broken school system to remove some of the barriers to school engagement that are driving people to home educate in the first place.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my views which I know are just a small reflection of a much bigger pool of home educating families in Queensland. I trust you will listen to the views of those that your law will affect most and reconsider these changes in the light of promoting the 'best interests' of our passionate homeschool students.