

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 1548  
**Submitted by:** [REDACTED]  
**Publication:** Making the submission public but withholding your name  
**Attachments:** See attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**

Dear Committee Members,

### **Submission regarding Amendments to Education (General Provisions) Act 2006**

Whilst I appreciate the concerns of the committee for the well-being of all students in Queensland, I believe that some of the amendments proposed fail to ensure students well-being.

I am writing to express that I don't support or approve of the proposed changes to the Act.

My home schooling background is that I am a mother of a 5 year old who is learning mostly at a prep level or above. In preparation for starting our home-school journey we have engaged weekly with our local home-school groups since our child was 3 years old.

We are farmers and live approximately 100km from our nearest town with shops and a school. The gravel one lane road to our town takes us at least one hour and 10 minutes each way. Even with this travel time and poor road conditions we travel the road 3 times each week to ensure that our child has the opportunity for great social interactions through participating in dance, gymnastics, swimming, and weekly play sessions with other home schoolers of all ages. We also participate in a weekly Home School Co-Op where our child not only enjoys beautiful friendships with home-school children of varying ages, but also learns English, Math, Drama, story writing, Music, Sports, Arts and Crafts activities together with public speaking, presentations and more. While our local Home School Co-Op is fabulous and extremely valuable, it doesn't replace the hours spent learning one to one at home with books, in nature, during shopping, while traveling to and from town and many more everyday experiences.

Whilst I have several concerns about the proposed changes, I will concentrate on the two main points I am particularly concerned about..

#### **1) Ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing**

I am a professional in the social field who has worked in Mental Health, suicide prevention and response, Domestic and Family Violence support, and first response in Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) units in WA, the NT and overseas in Switzerland.

I can't get past the fact that the new proposed changes are based on the idea to '**ensure the child's safety and wellbeing**'. The language in the proposed amendment bill is unclear and very broad and does not provide a definition of **how** child safety and wellbeing is proposed to be measured, nor **who** makes the final decision whether the safety and wellbeing of a child is being met. I would really appreciate if someone could get back to me explaining how this will be measured and judged. Whilst the papers supporting the proposed amendment seemingly are trying to promise something different; there is no guarantee that the safety and well being of a **child attending school are protected**.

**It is a fact that bullying, violence, and self harm issues at schools have never been higher. Children are often forced to sit for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, in the same classroom as their bullies and tormentors, with no option to escape the mental, emotional and sometimes physical torment. We would all agree that this can result in:**

- **long term trauma,**
- **stress,**
- **mental health issues,**
- **lack of self esteem,**
- **a poor learning environment with possibly poor educational outcomes,**
- **lack of sense of belonging and inclusivity, and**
- **with all this, may also lead to poor health decisions.**

Furthermore, children are measured against their peers, exposing them to unhealthy judgment and peer pressures. Mental health issues in children and young adults is at an all-time high, and often caused by bullying, peer pressure, unfair treatments by teachers, and struggling to follow the mainstream school work load.

Coming from my professional experience as a Social Worker, as well as my own experiences as a child, where I learned schools to be a very unsafe and unhealthy place, I have endeavoured to protect my child from the same harm myself and many others at school endured.

Instead, I choose to provide a happy, safe, supportive and motivating learning environment to ensure the highest educational outcome that also facilitates self-confidence and a sense of achievement in my child. She will not be measured against others to crush her confidence or to provoke an idea of “being better than...”. Instead she will be motivated to strive to achieve to the best of her abilities and to be proud of her achievements.

No mainstream or distance education school can offer a safer environment or higher intention for my child's wellbeing, while also aiming for the highest educational outcome.

This brings me to my second point I would like to make.

## **2) Forcing use of the Australian Curriculum and Increased Reporting**

It is the one-on-one approach in our home-schooling journey that facilitates learning at my child's speed, exploring her personal interests (which are sometimes above my child's age group). It facilitates self driven learning with a love for learning. We also regularly capitalise on instruction and lessons from other parents, community members and experts in their fields. Sometimes, this sparks interests and passions within our child, and we are able to go away and deeply explore an area of interest. Enforcing the Australian Curriculum will severely limit this opportunistic learning and stifle the ability for us to freely learn above our age group with topics that my child might want to investigate, as the Australian Curriculum would dictate subject areas and levels of learning according to her year level.

Having to follow ACARA in all subjects is not only impossible for families like us, who live in the Outback or remote areas, it is also utterly impractical for a child in a bush setting.

Being a dedicated home educator is not something I take lightly. I plan ahead, I spend one to one time with my child, I adapt learning targets to my specific child and our lifestyle, while also having fun.

We travel for hours to access health facilities, visit museums and/or workshops, participate in home-school Co-Ops, participate in sporting activities, social interactions, to maintain friendships and family gatherings. If remote/ bush families (or all home-school families for this matter) have to follow, plan and report on all subject in ACARA, I am afraid something has to give. Sadly my child's socialisation and sporting activities would need to be reduced: this achieves the opposite of the proposed amendments goal to ensure well being, inclusiveness, safety and happiness.

Please keep our reporting needs in ACARA limited to English and Maths and one other subject area (plus special interests), so that we can ensure that our children get our time to continue to receive a high education, in a one to one setting, with time to interact and socialise for their wellbeing and happiness.

The only thing that would be achieved under the proposed changes to follow ACARA and report on all subjects, is to guarantee that home schooling parents are as overwhelmed and burnt out as many main stream teachers are, whilst spending all our time ticking boxes instead of focussing on our children's education and wellbeing.

Given that the few Australian studies conducted comparing the educational outcome of mainstream schooled children versus home-educated children all concluded that home schooled children achieve as high, or higher, than their peers, it is questionable on what grounds the proposed changes were made in the first place.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the proposed changes relating to home schooling, and to engage in a collaborative dialogue with home schooling stakeholders to identify and address the real issues driving this educational choice. By doing so, together we can work towards a more inclusive and responsive educational system that respects the choices and concerns of all families.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

