

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee, After learning of the proposals to the Education Bill 2024, I would like to add my voice, and that of my family, to the objections of such changes. I believe the proposed changes are quite simplistic, in response to a complex reality. As someone with higher education and varied work experience with vulnerable persons, including children, there are many concerns as to the proposals not being in the best interests of individual children in their educational journey. Implementation of the National Curriculum for everyone appears to be more of a stream-lined, management purpose than in the best interests of the child. Yes, some do choose this curriculum, and that's wonderful if it's working for their child, however the point of homeschooling is flexibility in learning and engagement. Many people have moved from mainstream schooling to homeschooling simply because the mainstream system is not working for their child or children.

We personally did not ever intend to homeschool. Our eldest completed kindergarten, followed by 18 months in school, before we withdrew from mainstream school to homeschool. This decision was not made lightly, but after much deliberation, research, and making social connections prior to leaving school. Our eldest has a creative personality, who was already a year "behind" in maths at the point of leaving school. Our child's behaviour at home during the school term was challenging, yet completely pleasant otherwise. The beauty of homeschooling is that we can progress at the child's individual pace, which differs from subject to subject. Not every student will ace every subject. Homeschooling allows for a personalised, engaging education, which makes me question the motives behind this proposed legislation. What is your true purpose for these changes? With all the available research and first-hand experience of those on the ground, it should be obvious conforming to a uniform educational system will only benefit a few. Yes, some children flourish in this method of education, but many do not. There are several methods of learning. I know we, for one, explored many until settling on an age-old Charlotte Mason philosophy of education, which we find consistent and comprehensive, while also allowing for time to individually further engage in practical activities and experiences, according to our unique children's individual gifts. As was repeatedly reiterated during the Parliamentary Briefing of 18th March 2024, continuity of education is important, and we believe this achieves that imperative. This method provides a better continuity of education for our children, than the mainstream system can offer, as the current education system narrative seems to be forever changing. As people making decisions on our state's education, I see a vast gap in your understanding of what homeschooling realistically is. May I suggest meeting with, and engaging with, a large cohort of homeschoolers. In doing so, many of the stereotypes, myths, and biased reporting would be dispelled. The Parliamentary Briefing, also included in the Bill's Explanatory Notes, indicate there was a small uptake of homeschool focus groups (without knowledge of your intentions, may I add). As a democratic government, elected by the people, for the people, I urge you to go out among the people, among the homeschool community. See for yourself who we are. One cannot judge what one does not truly know. It is frustrating to have to waste our precious time to justify our children are, in fact, educated, to a government department that already does not have the resources to ensure this aligns with the government's subjective narrative of the day. The proposed changes to the provisional license, are being justified as important to "continuity of learning." Considering schools have six to eight weeks off over summer, this premise does not hold. As a homeschooling family we choose when our holidays will be. Observations within our family (and noticeably while in mainstream school) are that by the seventh week into term my children are tired and need some respite. Consequently we

do six weeks on, one week off, including throughout the state-assigned holidays. We have also schooled around other educational opportunities, including travelling and visiting historical and scientific sites. I believe it is particularly important for the parent of a child transitioning from mainstream to home school, and in the best interests of the child, to have time to re-calibrate (especially so, if the child has suffered trauma in the mainstream system), before beginning their homeschooling journey. The current two month period allows an opportunity for the homeschooling parent to re-connect with their child, assess and navigate the best way to educate their child in a personalised manner. Yes, some will have a plan in place before changing their educational pathway, but it is not in the best interest for everyone. As such, it is important to allow this two month window to plan for a quality education. As an educated person, surely you are aware of history and the dangerous ground our recent governments are treading if it believes and implements a uniform system, where they decide what is right for children they do not know, as opposed to responsive parents who know their children better than any other. Our education system is broken, hence the mass exodus of students AND teachers in recent years. Social media peer-pressure is not the reason, as Education Minister, Di Farmer, believes. This leads me to the point made on child safety, based upon the very tragic death of a homeschooled student, due to suicide. As mentioned, I have experience working professionally with vulnerable persons. At one point this included assessing best practice for a suicide postvention support group, specifically for youth. I cannot understand how you came to the conclusion that streamlining homeschool families with ACARA is the answer to a single youth suicide, who was already known to the Department of Child Safety and the Child Youth and Mental Health Service (CYMHS). This is clearly a Child Safety and CYMHS issue. Has there been any comparable research undertaken as to the number of suicides of children and youth in the mainstream school system? I personally know of several. Youth suicide is a serious issue, yet the homeschool community is being used as a scapegoat for it. Children and youth go missing and media get behind the search, until the youth is found to have died by suicide and the media is silent on the outcome. Obviously I see this as such a multi-faceted issue and I could go on and on of the injustices, bias, and inconsistencies of the government and media narratives. It is my understanding that some people in power assume homeschooling parents are not educated to a level fit to educate our children. Many of us are tertiary-educated, and sacrifice careers and finances, even in financially-difficult times, to be with our children, to enable them to learn and follow their talents, according to their unique learning styles and gifts. We research, consult, test and refine, adapt a variety of teaching and learning methods, according to the needs of our children. This has become our investment of time and money. Our children are the future and we deem that our greatest priority. I appreciate the ability to vote for a representative of constituents, including myself and my family. As such, please ensure my voice is heard by the committee and in parliament.