

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission
EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to table my concerns and objections to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

As a home educating parent and considering the multitudes of research myself and the home educating community has undertaken, I have immense apprehension for the home educating children and parents affected by the proposed amendments.

I strongly object to home educators being required to facilitate the Australian Curriculum.

In the case of my child (currently registered with HEU), I was able to personalise an extensive learning plan with the ability to choose ACARA units from the curriculums widely available online. I chose two units from Australians Together for her entire plan. My point being that I know that these curriculums are available. I know that I can reference them at any point to monitor my child's level or to guide their learning, should I need to do so. However, I do not find it necessary to follow the curriculum as there are endless opportunities to learn, in different ways, that suit my child's needs and interests more appropriately.

Home educating, for us, is a 24/7 experience. We are doing maths equations when we walk the dog, discussing fractions and telling the time when we are baking, discussing the online lessons my child completed and brainstorming conversation starters as we drive 70kms to meet new friends at Homeschool Hub. We choose online lessons from much higher grade levels and complete workbooks consistent with current learning

concepts. We are in nature, hands on where possible, nurturing a safe environment and encouraging life-long learning.

My child is registered as Year 2. We are completing Year 3 workbooks, using higher grade textbooks and she is placed at Year 5 level reading and comprehension. My child processes best verbally, rather than on paper and can sometimes struggle thinking when she is sitting but she is brilliant, and I have the opportunity by home educating to support her in a way that serves her best. She is business-minded and wants to attend university.

How would the amendment support my child? Does the amendment then allow for more access to university? I do acknowledge the practicality of schooling not being designed for home education but ask that access to university be considered in developing new legislation as many home-educated children attend university, often early.

It is notable that the requirements for implementation have been omitted from the current proposal thus I am unable to comment with specificity. As such, I expect that these vague proposals cannot be satisfactory to support legislation amendments being passed given that the implications for home educating families cannot be truly considered without more details. Forcing home educating parents to prioritise reporting over educating their children, let alone having sovereignty in choice of content, would, in the long run, be detrimental to society.

Respectfully, not considering the child safety incidents sited, there has been no valuable education-related cause provided for this amendment. Should the Education Department have concerns for the education provided in home educating families, it would be most beneficial to address those concerns with transparency and support. In fact, the Queensland Education Department fails to include or acknowledge Home Education for the most part. The DoE's Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student strategy, the state and federal websites have minimal home education related content and the Minister for Education failing to include home education families in her campaign efforts are some examples. The recent situation has brought inclusivity to front of mind.

If the increased registrations have overwhelmed the Home Education Unit, there are several ways to manage the inflow.

- Create a portal for registered home education families.
- Give each child a Queensland Education email and Microsoft access.
- Create an online plan template with drop down options including other.
- Allow samples to be uploaded to the portal for review.
- Provide support with increased staff and information.

A system such as this would streamline the laborious task of reviewing entire plans individually. Care would still be required in approving plans and reviewing samples however I predict this would allow for more clarity and efficiency between parties.

I strongly object to home educators being required to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child.

Again, the specific requirements are omitted in this proposed amendment however it poses an enormous question of exactly what will satisfy as evidence that home education is in the best interest of the child?

It is extremely disturbing to me that this is tabled as proposed legislation. Would we consider that traditional schooling be required to prove that it is in the best interest of the child?

I support parents being able to decide to home educate. I do not support any instance where a child is put through undue stress to assess if home education is in their best interest. I know my child became distressed at the thought of not being able to do the plan that we had worked hard to create for her and the idea that she would have to go back to completing work like when she was at school (Distance Ed). I do not support any agency, beyond parents and carers having authority to decide the best education avenue for their child.

Child safety at school and at home is especially important. I do strongly support practical and effective means to protect children.

- My niece was attacked at school with a bladed weapon by another student. She was lacerated several times on her torso and arms.
- My eldest daughter was hit with a heavy shovel in the eye socket at school. I was informed of an incident that occurred, but the details were withheld by the teacher. The repercussions for my daughter could have been dire as I was not given the appropriate information at the time of the incident to then treat the child.

I strongly object to home educators being denied provisional registration.

Provisional registration is a safeguard for those that need it. I do not support a child being forced to attend school in a state of trauma.

What support is being offered in lieu of provisional registration for those that have removed children from school for their wellbeing?

If a system such as my above suggestions were implemented, the registration process and developing a plan would be a more time efficient process. One that can be overwhelming for families that are new to home education as it is their priority to be providing the best education suitable to their child.

Could the Home Education Unit develop a short-term basic learning plan to provide to families to support continued learning in the interim?

In the Written Advice under Home Education 19 point 6 – removing the certificate of registration and associated obligations to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden for parents, while ensuring parents continue to have a written notice to evidence registration and conditions on registration.

How does replacing one document with another reduce unnecessary regulatory burden? What are the associated obligations?

We started our schooling journey with eKindy (Brisbane SDE) then enrolled with (Charters Towers SDE) for Prep and Year 1. These are good schools though by the end of year 1, my child was not being nurtured in her abilities nor was she engaged in the content. Teachers have boxes to tick and for the most part they do not have the time to individualise learning for those that are above the standard. My goal was always to home educate though I started with distance education as a middle ground. I enrolled with Euka in January this year, though when I reviewed the curriculum, I was immediately regretful of doing so and requested a refund. My child would not have been stimulated by the work outlined and I would have had a challenging time getting her to complete it. There is a great difference between getting a child to complete an activity and embracing a child's ability to question and understand a learning concept. I can work with her strengths and personalise the format of her learning to progress in other areas. As a 7yo that could read 200 words per minute but that had not yet found her joy for writing, the traditional schooling format was not advantageous to my child. Now that I am home educating, with my personalised learning plan, I am certain that my child is now receiving the education that she deserves. She is happier, more engaged educationally and flourishing in the community (socially).

Furthermore, this situation has made evident that the home education sector requires advocacy. Deputy Director-General for Policy, Performance, International and Intergovernmental, Kathleen Forrester mentioned at the committee meeting that the new guiding principle was just the first step, implying that further regulation is to come.

I will support discussions and processes implemented that serve the child however I implore the Education Department to reconsider their approach and to offer further avenues to develop strategies in a united manner.

I thank you for your time and consideration of these vital matters.

Sincerely,

Natalie Thomas