

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1599
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Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Preserving Homeschool Autonomy : Education (General Provisions) and other legislation amendment bill
Dear Sir/Madam, As a qualified teacher who is experienced in mainstream and Distance Education, I have also homeschooled my children for part of their education. I now work with homeschool families to provide guidance and support in getting ready to homeschool, selecting resources, writing learning plans and general assistance for parents and students. I find the proposed changes to the bill concerning for several reasons. Many children aren't coping in classrooms, physical and mental health is spiralling and teachers are not coping with out-of-control behaviour and apathetic students, and the proposed changes to the homeschool framework will greatly impact the choice of many families who want to homeschool. With the onslaught of technology in school classrooms and many schools choosing to use online maths programs whereby students all work independently with very little instruction, many students are discouraged or disadvantaged by the isolation of doing Maths on their own and the sheer volume of modules or topics to get through on their own each week. Along with managing hundreds of emails and notifications from various groups within the school, online content to read and online submissions for assignments, many kids are simply burnt out. They are gazing at a screen for most lessons and must juggle between tabs and open split screens, and this struggle goes for regular A and B grade students, let alone those who find it a challenge to understand the content. I am seeing more and more kids leaving school to home educate, believing distance education will be better but are overwhelmed with even more online lessons and the digital responsibility of distance education.

Homeschooling them becomes the only option for families who want to educate their children without constantly having to look at a screen, however, by allowing only children for whom "homeschooling will be in their best interests" and meet the government's checklist to be approved, will prohibit families from having the choice to look after their child's best interests. After all, the parents know their child better than anyone else. Constant screen use is not healthy for children or teens and families should have the option of choosing to educate at home with more practical, meaningful, supplementary and hands-on methods. It seems that the goal is to reduce the numbers of steadily climbing homeschoolers in Qld, which it may, but you're also lacking a database of experienced teachers for which you will need if you cut the numbers of homeschoolers. The introduction of mandatory Australian curriculum inclusion into homeschooling learning plans, forces students to learn in the same manner as mainstream school students. It's a very wide curriculum and it's very shallow. You can't expect all children to thrive and develop any kind of deep learning when they only touch on topics without fully exploring them in depth. When homeschoolers make the study path narrower, to focus on particular areas of science or HASS, they develop deeper, longer lasting connections in the brain because they have spent more time researching a topic they are interested in or already have some knowledge in the area, or someone in the family or their circle is involved in it and can guide them further and offer unique experiences. For example, students studying bees and apiarists not only learn the science behind the Ava Tony and physiology of bees, hierarchy and give and honey production but they may also spend time with an apiarist collecting honey, building hives and selecting queens. Then comes labelling and market honey, taking into consideration the laws about labelling, designing labels using software and the use of photographs by of their product for sale. Forcing homeschoolers to cover the Australian Curriculum in its entirety would be defeat the purpose of homeschooling, which is to offer students alternative methods of learning that suit their learning style, their needs and interests.

Homeschooling provides a safe place for students who find difficulty managing the large technological load of online learning in schools and allows them to choose methods that enable them to learn better. By forcing students to cover the Australian curriculum as schools do, this takes away the flexibility of why they are homeschooling in the first place. In order to cover Australian curriculum, students who are homeschooling will need to spend endless hours on the computer online in order to view the vast amount of content required, rather than home educators choosing activities and experiences to learn content which are more conducive to learning than reading information on a screen. Many students can't deal with spending all day surrounded by bad behaviour, peers who are not interested in learning and bullying. Homeschooling is an option to learn in a environment away from these distractions, and with teachers unable to control worsening behaviour in classrooms, families need to be able to make a choice for their children about what they believe to be best for them. Lastly, I find it very disappointing that representatives of the homeschool community were not consulted in this matter, however businesses were. Neither were all Qld registered homeschooling families notified of such proposed changes. I believe the government needs to be much more transparent in such matters, involving representatives from the homeschool community - home educators. There are many highly educated, intelligent home educators who are deeply invested in their children's learning and it would be wise and beneficial to gain wisdom from them and involve them in major decision processes like these, for the best results in matters pertaining to homeschooling. Sincerely, [REDACTED]