

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation. As a member of the homeschooling community, I find it disheartening that the focus appears to be on enforcing the Australian National Curriculum on every child regardless of their individual needs. I am a Sports Scientist with qualifications in Educational Psychology, who's entire life revolves around the pursuit of performance enhancement. In my experience there is one common denominator in seeking optimal performance and that is that everyone achieves it differently. Of course there are guidelines to follow, gold standards and best practices to consider however if we want individuals to reach their full potential, then the process needs to be unique to that individual. Potentially the same approach should be applied when seeking optimal educational performance. Before I continue, I must clearly state that I am not a rebel standing against conformity, nor am I anti-authority. Academia is important to me and I am a realist and pragmatic to my core. However, I have recently been facing a dilemma that has forced me to question the status quo of traditional education and the societal expectations of what makes a good education.

Approximately 6 months ago, after much research and consideration I made the decision to withdraw my son from the mainstream system and commence self managing his education. I had been witnessing his decline since commencing his formal education in Prep. When he entered Prep, he was tested for class placement and considered advanced for his year level. I have been watching the demise of his mental health and downward trajectory of his academic performance ever since. Initially we believed it was the result of being a "Covid Kid" and that things would get better with time, yet still his light dimmed. In the years proceeding we tried many interventions, allied health professionals, tutoring, diagnostic testing, counselling, changing schools and still his light dimmed and his academic confidence diminished. At the ripe old age of eight, his light was all but fully extinguished and his desire to live was even in question towards the end of our journey within the school system. As I am sure you are aware, suicide is the leading cause of death between the ages of 14-44, with 75% of those being male, I was not about to let my child become one of those statistics. As a result we began our self managed education journey (not dissimilar to self managed superannuation funds, creating optimal performance based on our needs). Since commencing his unique and creative program, Theo has reignited his passion for learning and his self confidence has grown exponentially. It is my firm belief that this is as a direct result of not being expected to fit into the box that is the education system and the Australian National Curriculum. He performs lessons in core literacy and numeracy that would meet Australian Curriculum standards, however he is not restricted to it or by it. His depth of knowledge and desire to learn goes beyond the curriculum, and forcing him to perform within it, suffocates his passion for learning and inevitably reaching his full potential. At this point my son has no diagnosis and could academically and socially meet the requirements expected of him in a traditional schooling environment, but at what cost to his mental health and sense of self. Only if we are allowed to continue on our unique path, managing and creating an educational program that suits my son's individuality and not be limited by the Australian Curriculum, ensures that my son, will at best, become a creative genius who changes the world, and at worst, will become a well rounded, fully functioning member of society with his mental health in tact, either way he will discover "his" optimal performance. Admittedly I am new to this homeschooling game, but in the short time that I have been a part of this community I am yet to witness a parent who does not wish success for, or what is best for their child. The notion that parents, by choosing a unique path for their child's learning, are acting against the best interests of

their children is misguided. I therefore urge you to take the time to listen to those with lived experience in educating their children and look into some of the research that provides insight into the benefits of individualised educational programs. I implore you to reconsider the proposed changes specifically around enforcing the National Curriculum on all students and the reporting requirements of parents and caregivers as this eats up valuable resources that could be put to better use. Together, we can work towards solutions that support the well-being and educational success of all children. Ultimately my goal for my child is finding the intersection between optimal performance and optimal wellbeing, and to achieve that, he needs to be allowed to do it his way.