

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express some concerns regarding the proposed Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, in particular Clause 68 and the inclusion of Section 7(da). As stakeholders in the homeschooling community, it's imperative that we engage in a thorough examination of the real issues prompting families to opt for homeschooling rather than simply enforcing rigid requirements. Firstly, I write to you with a sense of urgency and frustration regarding the proposed imposition of the national curriculum on homeschooling families – Clause 68. It is evident that there is a profound disconnect between the drafting of this legislation and the desires and needs of homeschooling families like mine. I am not a homeschooling parent. I am a proud Aunt of a homeschooled niece and am aware, and in full support of, homeschooling as an educational option. I have watched as my niece has flourished whilst being homeschooled by my sister. My niece is an intelligent, happy, well adjusted & inquisitive girl. Homeschooling has benefited her beyond what I can express & she has thrived being homeschooled. Since the beginning of their journey, I have seen firsthand how much homeschooling has benefitted her. My niece struggled within the school system – it wasn't a fit for her - but with effort, determination, and most of all a sense of love and honour for giving my niece a high-quality education, my sister has overcome any barriers and as a result – my niece is thriving.

Let me be unequivocally clear: homeschooling families do not wish to follow the national curriculum. The overwhelming majorities of homeschooling families firmly believe that a can high-quality education can be provided for their children without being shackled by its restrictive, limiting, and shallow constraints. Rather than serving as a guide for excellence, the national curriculum operates as a minimum standard document designed for teachers who undergo years of training to interpret and implement it effectively. In regard to Section 7(da), I am a bit perplexed to read that only “home education [...] should be provided in a way that – (i) is in the best interest [...] and (ii) ensures [...] a high-quality education.” Who defines “best interest” or “high-quality education”? My concern is that this addition to the Act can easily be misused by individuals or authorities to stop families from choosing to home educate their children. Is this the reason why this addition only applies to home education, but not for “the State, parents, teachers, school communities and non-government entities”? The choice to home educate children should be the decision of the parents and any attempts by the Government to exert undue influence on this decision is an overreach of authority. I urge you to consider my concerns and remove Section 7(da) and the requirement to follow an “approved education and training program” in Clause 68. It's crucial to acknowledge that homeschooling is often chosen by families for a variety of reasons, including dissatisfaction with the traditional schooling system, concerns about safety and bullying, religious or philosophical beliefs, or a desire for more personalized and flexible learning experiences tailored to individual student needs. Rather than imposing stricter regulations, I urge the committee to prioritize understanding and addressing the root causes of homeschooling trends. This entails listening to and considering the feedback from homeschooling families, who are directly impacted by these legislative changes. Their insights and experiences are invaluable in shaping effective policies that support the diverse needs of families while ensuring the well-being and educational success of children. Additionally, I would like to state that I believe that the timeframe that has been given for homeschooling families to respond to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 to enhance the regulation of home education has not been adequate. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Sincerely, Caitlin Maloney