

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1634
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
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Submitter Comments:

To the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee, I am writing to object to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Bill 2024 in its current form. I have specific concerns with the implications of Clauses 18, 64 & 68. In particular, I object to the proposed requirement under section 68 for homeschool plans and reports to be consistent with the national curriculum, ACARA. In order for home education to be a viable and valuable avenue to provide Queensland children with the best possible education, caregivers who home educate must be allowed to design a curriculum that is responsive to the individual needs of the children in their care.

Homeschool families choose to educate for a variety of reasons, but something they all have in common is that they have determined that the mainstream education system—public, private, and distance education—are not what is best for their child(ren). A key component of that system is ACARA, which does not take into account the following.

- *Asynchronous development - Children's readiness for skills and concepts does not arrive with birthdays. Children's ability to learn a topic is dependent on how useful or interesting the topic is to them, development of supporting skills, the moment and manner in which the topic is introduced, underlying intelligence, learning disabilities, neurodivergence, and more. All children are "ahead" of and would be held back by ACARA in some areas and "behind" in others, which is natural and to be expected when children are afforded the opportunity to learn and explore as they are able. Home educating carers are better positioned to understand their children's needs than any school teacher or curriculum writer. It is only appropriate that those carers be given the freedom to meet those needs and be responsive to them as they change, with the support of government. The right to home educate becomes meaningless when overly prescriptive. Home educated children deserve the opportunity to be educated in a way that is effective and meaningful to them. Homeschooling families have the advantage of not needing to throw every type of pasta to the wall in order to find something that will stick for their children. They are able to hone in on what works for their children and ought to be encouraged to stick with that rather than waste time and energy, and risk alienating their children, for the sake of being consistent with a national curriculum that was designed to cover all the bases to ensure a minimum standard of education for most Australian children.
- *Home education is able to achieve in a much more organic, applied, relevant, memorable, supportive, and meaningful way than mainstream education many of the most important skills in the ACARA curriculum across years 1-12. Flexibility in the timing and manner of instruction/exploration as well as the number of topics covered, however, is key to achieving this superior outcome. The Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee needs to understand that the depth of learning that home education allows may logically result less breadth. The time and energy it takes to explore a topic to the extent of a child's interests and abilities must be respected. It is clear that in our rapidly-changing world, curiosity, specialisation, intrinsic motivation, and creativity are the keys to innovation and solving global problems and advancing society. To give Queensland home educated children the best chance of success in our modern world, homeschool families must not be tied to and limited by the highly prescriptive and excessively broad national curriculum.
- *Family systems - Many home educated children have siblings who are also home educated. A family is a very different ecosystem and learning environment to a classroom of unrelated children who only share age and geography in common. While a school teacher can be asked to proceed in an orderly manner through topics as outlined in ACARA, with the topics and skills appropriate to perhaps 60% of their students, a home educator should not be required to lead multiple children through separate curricula. For most homeschool

families, this simply isn't possible, or even desirable. Homeschool families have the advantage of being able to make the most of the opportunity to educate children of different ages and abilities around a topic in a way that incorporates the needs, interests, and abilities of each child, around the activities of the family, and adds depth and richness to the learning experience for all children. For these reasons and more, which I understand Queenslanders are communicating to you in droves, I implore you to preserve homeschooling as a viable and valuable option to offer the best quality education to Queensland children. To this end, please: *Do NOT require homeschool plans to be consistent with ACARA; *Do NOT require homeschool reports to include all subject areas, which only adds to the administrative load for home educators and does not improve learning outcomes for children; *Do NOT impose additional requirements for homeschool plans for senior secondary, as these are the years when homeschooled children experience the greatest opportunity to differentiate their skills according to their interests and abilities, increasing their confidence and employability; and *DO allow home education to continue through December of the year the child turns 18, as it never made sense to deprive homeschool children of the opportunity to have a year 12 education. The recent dramatic increase in Queensland's homeschooling numbers is an indicator that the mainstream education system is not working for some children. Their families are voting with their feet. Attempting to impose the one-size-fits-all, ACARA-linked approach to educating Queensland's homeschooling children does not make sense, given it has already failed these families. If what you are endeavouring to achieve with changes to the education bill is improved educational outcomes for Queensland children and strengthened employment and economic outcomes for Queensland society, you must allow home educating families the opportunity to offer an education that respects and is responsive to the individual needs of those families, which only they can know and implement. Thank you for your consideration.