

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

I wish to voice my objection to all the proposed changes to legislation related to homeschooling. None of these changes seem to have children's educational nor overall wellbeing at their core, despite the proposal stating this goal. I believe parents should maintain the right to deliver education to their children in a way that best suits their child. In addition, children have the right to an education that is individualised and customised to their abilities and needs. I have met numerous homeschool families over the years both socially within the community, as a parent and as a psychologist and I believe I have not met one family that did not have the best interests of their child at the forefront of their minds AND were active in seeking out educational experiences that suited their child's needs. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, most of those families were repairing damage and trauma done to their children by an education system that is simply not equipped.

Below are just some of my concerns relating to the proposed legislation: 1. The proposed changes to take away immediate access to homeschooling by removing provisional registration. It ultimately demands of home educators something which is not even demanded of schools - that a learning plan be made immediately - essentially on the first day of attendance. A school would not be expected to have assessed and made learning objectives for students attending on their first day, therefore asking this of homeschool families seems discriminatory. Often families resort to home education as an emergency response to school trauma and they must be able to continue to access immediate registration as they seek assessment, resources and plan which they have 3 months to document. 2. The proposal that families will need to be assessed or prove homeschooling is the best option for their child. Any change to shift the decision so it is made by anyone else but a parent is completely inappropriate and impinges on basic rights of families, parents and children. Families undertake massive sacrifices in order to homeschool their children, including financial due to loss of income and the decision is not taken lightly. 3. The proposal that homeschooling children be forced to follow National Curriculum. This both disadvantages and limits quality learning that is individualised to the child. A child has the right to a quality education and this limits the parents capacity to respond to the child's abilities and needs. Homeschool students regularly are accepted into university study based on a variety of assessments from the age of 14 years old which surely is a true testament to the success of uninhibited homeschooling. The proposed legislation leaves the option of university attendance in senior years out, which is of great concern. If universities are confident to offer a place to a younger than standard age, why would the Government interfere in this and create unnecessary barriers for gifted students. Instead, the Government could consider this as a sign of homeschooling as being unbiased and true reflection of quality education. In addition, the great majority of students who become homeschoolers do so because they are not being provided for properly within the school system; they are often gifted or have developmental individuality which means a standard curriculum needs to be changed so they learn at their best possible level. I implore the Government to take more time to understand homeschooling, how parents provide resources that best serve their children's learning and it will become clear that many parents put in a huge amount of care, time and finances into ensuring their child's educational success. In my experience they do huge amounts of research to find programs and materials that support their child's needs, often from around the world and this certainly does not need regulating. To regulate curriculum would ultimately mean the right of a child to a quality education would be lost. This brings me to my final point. 4. Children who are neurodiverse most often do not get their needs met within the school system. At worst, neurodiverse students in educational institutions face

educational and emotional trauma due to these needs not being understood or met. This is related to the previous point, in that education for our neurodiverse children must be bespoke. It cannot be a rigid curriculum as seen in the National Curriculum. My experience as a psychologist has been that these children are often brought to everyone's attention for what seem like behavioural issues, however this is always as a result of their underlying developmental needs not being met. Home education allows supports to be in place as needed, academic demands being tailored to the child's needs within a supportive environment. I believe it is a grave misunderstanding about the way homeschool parents facilitate their children's education that leads the Government to believe the homeschooling families need to be regulated in this way. In summary, I wish to thank you for considering the objections to the proposed changes to home education and I would like my opposition to the bill to be recorded. Finally, I would like to encourage the Government to gain some more understanding into home education and how it is working within Queensland BEFORE seeking to regulate, restrain or limit home education via legislation.