

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1659
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Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee members,

Firstly 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.

I would also like to clearly state that I do not support the proposed amendments to the education Bill that has recently been presented to parliament.

By creating a new guiding principle that sets out that home education should be provided in a way that is in the best interests of the child or young person, taking into account the child's safety, wellbeing and access to a high-quality education, has implications that parents who have made many sacrifices to provide for the best interests of their child/ren is not occurring within the broader home schooling community.

A guiding principle does not take into account a families behaviour, actions or values, it is a guideline that helps with decision-making. Decision making in the context of homeschooling should be the responsibility of the parents. The best interest of a child is protected within the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), being ratified in Australia in 1990, which states that cases involving abuse, neglect and exploitation of a child be appropriately investigated, treated and followed-up with (article 9.1). Article 18.1 (CRC) also states that "parents or legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of a child." Homeschooling parents have already taken on the great responsibility for the development of their children. The decision, to homeschool, is never made lightly and is always due to the parents or legal guardians protecting and further developing their child/ren intellectually, emotionally, socially and cognitively. Home schooling is hard work, it requires endless hours to provide environments and opportunities that cater for each individual child, their needs and their best interest. Home schooling families take this responsibility very seriously, in regards to making their own decisions based on the needs and requirements of the children in their care. There is absolutely no excuse for the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child, however, this amendment is not about the protection of children as much as it is about setting a legislation that impacts a parent and child's right to be protected to engage in home schooling decision-making based on the best interest of a child from the perspective of the responsible adult.

The amendment that requires a child's educational program for home education to be consistent with an approved curriculum takes away the decision-making responsibility that a parent or legal guardian is entitled to uphold to provide opportunities in the best interest of a child. The Australian National Curriculum has already undergone much scrutiny in regards to its overcrowded nature. As a fully registered teacher and previous employee for the Department of Education Queensland, it was impossible to fulfil the complicated requirements of the curriculum as it was not inclusive enough and too overloaded. This is a common reason parents make the bold move to home school their children, as they are making a decision for the best interest of their children in the context of their unique circumstances. Section 36 of the Human Rights Act 2019 states that "every child has the right to have access to primary and secondary education appropriate to the child's needs." It also states "every person has the right to have

access, based on the person's abilities, to further vocational education and training that is equally accessible to all." Following a standardised curriculum that is already problematic in its delivery to diverse learners of all kinds, is in conflict with this basic human right and the rights of children to have parents make decisions that is in the child's best interest.

Strengthening parent reporting requirements puts an unfair and unjust load upon parents, especially when they are trying to provide basic human child rights to their children by adapting learning experiences to cater for their child/ren's learning style and requirements. Unlike teachers who are trained and experienced in report writing, expecting parents or legal guardians to engage in education as though they are qualified teachers is contrary to our rights and justice. Home schooling is not the same as school. Parents who choose this pathway are trying to better their children's experiences of life and nurture an attitude of being a life long learner. From my experience in the education industry, teachers are already reporting high levels of burnout due to the stresses of the industry including reporting, behaviour management and unreasonable expectations. This proposed amendment would place this stress onto parents unnecessarily. It would be a great disservice to the family unit.

Streamlining and strengthening home education registration, including by removing the 60- day provisional registration and unnecessary regulatory burden associated with registration, as well as requiring a summary of a child's educational program be provided with the registration application, is problematic in its delivery. This provisional registration period is aimed to allow parents a chance to begin the process of home school planning. Teachers are given time without their students to manufacture their lesson and unit plans through holidays and non-contact time. Why would we expect a parent without specialised training to be expected to submit this type of plan without appropriate time when they clearly do not have time without their children present? This is a great injustice. Many families who take on the responsibility and workload of home schooling their children are usually doing so because their children need it. There are enough stresses that are encountered whilst adapting to home schooling, that I am baffled as to why we would try to make the process harder for parents who genuinely care and love their children especially when there are many other pressing issues and changes that are effecting the household dynamics during this time.

I would also like to note as Queensland has no official home schooling association, the home schooling community has had extremely limited representation in the consultation of the amendments to this bill. Without such an association, there was no way for the homeschooling community to be heard. The two people representing 'the people' directly, Amanda Bartle and Patricia Fitzgerald, were actively excluded from the second round of consultation. This has resulted in my voice not being represented during that round of consultation.

This proposal certainly does not represent the home schooling communities best interest. It does not support home schooling families to choose an educational pathway or curriculum that is in the best interest of their children and their educational needs. It removes the decision-making process from the parents of a child to a governing body

that is not considering the best interest of each individual child and their individual learning needs. It removes basic human rights.

I would like to clearly re-state that I do not support the proposed amendments to the education Bill that has recently been presented to parliament. I urge the committee to reconsider the Bill and the proposed amendments and listen to the home schooling community.

Kind Regards,



Gold Coast, QLD.