

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1699
Submitted by: Michael Stevens
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the Inquiry into Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

As a current homeschooling parent, I do not support some of the changes proposed and I am concerned about the impact these proposed changes will have on my child's education, on the Queensland homeschooling community, and on the future education and lives of Queensland children.

I do not believe that the bill should include a requirement for all homeschoolers to follow the national curriculum.

While I understand the importance of educational standards, I firmly believe that homeschooling families should have the flexibility to tailor their children's learning experiences to their unique needs and circumstances.

Homeschooling provides an opportunity for personalized and holistic education. Each child has distinct strengths, interests, and learning styles. By allowing homeschool families to choose their own curriculum, parents are empowered (and have the time and resources) to create a customized learning path that caters to their child's specific needs. This flexibility fosters a love for learning, encourages students to explore subjects deeply and allows families can incorporate life skills, character development, and real-world experiences into their curriculum.

For our son, some examples of this approach include:

- An observation that you could melt an aluminium can in a fire on a family camping trip being extended into a wonderful program of researching and building a forge, learning and investigating the different melting points of metals, smelting aluminium and copper and accidentally creating and exploring alloys.
- An interest in robotics prompting the development of a robotics club which entered three very passionate and successful homeschool teams in the 2023 Roborave competition.
- A recent interest in native edible plants which is shaping up to make for a very interesting program in the year ahead.

The flexibility in choice of curriculum is also critical to allow parents to cater for specific learning needs. Throughout our early homeschooling years, we have been teaching our dyslexic and dysgraphic homeschooler how to read and write following best practices recognised around the world - approaches that were not, at the time, included in ACARA. Had we simply followed ACARA and not investigated and applied the latest research we most certainly would not have been giving my son a high-quality education.

I am concerned with the inclusion in the bill of wording that suggests the Queensland Government should decide whether mainstream school or homeschooling is in the best interested of my child.

As parents, we have the primary responsibility for our children's education and a deep understanding of all the issues which contribute to the decision of "best".

I strongly disagree with the removal of the 60 day provisional registration period.

The decision to homeschool is very significant. Allowing 60 days for parents to prepare and submit an educational plan when removing a child from mainstream school is reasonable. Forcing a child to continue in an environment which has been identified as not meeting the academic needs of the child and is potentially having a significant negative impact on the social/emotional needs of the child while a plan is prepared is clearly inappropriate.

I also object to the lack of representative consultation with the homeschool community for this Inquiry. We are a committed, well-informed group of parents who should be listened to.

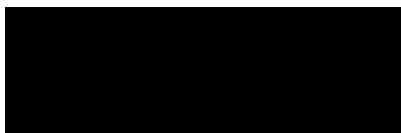
Queensland currently has no official state homeschooling association. The two people most actively representing the homeschooling community (Amanda Bartle and Patricia Fitzgerald) were actively excluded (as mentioned in the Monday 18th March briefing). We must ensure that the needs of children/parents in our homeschooling community are listened to and valued as equally important as the needs of students/teachers in our school communities.

In conclusion, I urge policymakers to:

- Recognize the value of homeschooling and grant families the autonomy to choose their educational path.
- Ensure parents remain in control of deciding if homeschooling is in the best interest of their child.
- Allow time for a parents to prepare an educational plan when removing children from mainstream schooling.
- Ensure the homeschool community is well represented by homeschool parents.

Thank you for considering these perspectives.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Michael Stevens.

Michael Stevens

Current homeschooling parent.