

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Questions to clarify - I would like a considered researched response.

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- What is the evidence that home ed is not currently of a high standard?
- What does ‘in the child’s best interest’ entail?
- Who defines suitable?
- Please define “be consistent with” the national curriculum
- This amendment does not abide by qld parliaments principles of good legislature - meaning, interpretation, clear intended purpose
- Why is an amendment to legislation needed? It is a costly process and many other states simply have internal policies

Main points elaborated on below:

1. The amount of reporting and planning being suggested is detrimental to both parents and HEU.
2. Students are being homeschooled in larger and larger numbers - this trend began before covid.
3. The reforms are being touted as for the best interest of child, parent and community, however there is no clear indication or evidence prevailing to this in regards to the home education reforms.
4. Removing the certificate of registration has further implications than intended.
5. Streamlining by removal of the provisional registration is highly detrimental to a wide array of families.
6. Shortening the show cause time frame from 30 to 14 days will cause undue stress on already tense families.
7. Consultation with the homeschooling community was inadequate, biased toward businesses with a vested interest in adopting the national curriculum, and actively sought to leave out key advocates.
8. The national curriculum is not to be held as the standard of high quality education - Australia’s results on the world stage are dismal.
9. The expenditure of the state on the implementation of completely unnecessary changes is a gross misuse of public funds.
10. It is clear that there is a push for more safeguarding of children, however none of the reforms being proposed for homeschooling grant the department any more power to investigate, seek evidence or refer to other agencies than they already have.

1. Requiring planning and reporting on all subject areas is an obscene amount of work for both parents and HEU employees. With the rising registrations for home education, and the level of planning and reporting already required by the department, increasing that workload exponentially will cost the government millions of dollars in man power to even read all of the reports, let alone process, make comment, or request further clarification or evidence.

2. The increase in homeschooling numbers continues to be related in post covid terms, yet the data being presented states that the numbers have been increasing since 2019, before

the covid pandemic even existed. This is curious to me and I do not understand what agenda is being pushed in relation to this.

3. Quoting Education Minister Di Farmer, “the reforms...will better serve...students, families, teachers and communities”. I would like to know how increasing the reporting responsibilities on parents, introducing qualifiers to a parents choice to homeschool, introducing, legislatively, requirements to conform our children's education to a failing model, is better serving us, our children, or our communities. “We need to make sure that the interests of the student are the priority especially in regard to their well-being and safety and this what this legislation will do”, how so? This statement has not been made in relation to the children within the school system who have suicided (19 in 2022-2023) however there were considerable recommendations made to give more power to the QLD Government in the oversight of homeschooled children, as 1 child in 2022-2023 suicided and was registered as homeschooled. That child was already known to CYMHS, had a home visit and was referred for investigated by SCAN (suspected child abuse and neglect unit).

What measures that this legislation is introducing that would have the ability to change the outcome for that child?

Surely, there had been oversight, connection to relevant health services, notification of the relevant child safety teams- under the unchanged education legislation, and yet this child still took their own life. Not to mention the other 19 children who were in the school system and presumably were being kept safe and referred to the appropriate services? (Though, from the statistics presented - they were not. As seen in table A.8 [appendix A, Annual Report; Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2022-2023], the number of child and youth suicide deaths was 20. The number of those known to Child Safety was 6, and we know that 1 of those six was homeschooled. Therefore, 5 of 19 school system child and youth suicide deaths were known to Child Safety, and 14 children were not. Despite that, the reports are alluding that children are safer at schools and that homeschooling, without significantly more oversight than present, is a significant risk - requiring legislative changes, at great cost to the public. This is simply not what the data is showing us. It is showing us that more than half of the children in the school system were not identified as at risk and referred to the appropriate services, yet the singular youth that was homeschooled was referred to and seen by a multitude of services, and homeschooling did not inhibit the state's ability to investigate suspected neglect and harm.)

4. No certificate

- Forcing parents to provide information not needed by the commonwealth to prove child registration for certain provisions
 - Having the certificate means that parents can provide this to services such as centrelink to prove the exemption eligibility for looking for work for certain payments, without divulging unnecessary and confidential information.
- Not an official document
 - A notice is not seen by many people, notably government employees, as official enough to count as a formal approval of registration, as is evidenced by the many threads in home educating groups on facebook where parents are frustration with having to provide multiple

forms of their approval to services such as centrelink. Having an official certificate allows a much clearer statement to other authorities.

5. Removal of provisional registration - an important time for families suffering trauma at the hands of schools, further causing harm to our children by needing to remain in an unsafe environment while paperwork is collated and submitted. I will not further explain this here, as I am sure there are many personal stories of how this has played out in real life being submitted by others.

6. Reduction of show cause response time to 14 days - personally, this would have resulted in my own child's registration being denied. I applied at the beginning of the year, not having my plan finalised, and knowing that I would receive a show cause notice, giving me a further 30 days to finalise and provide my plan for my child. In those 30 days, our family was dealing with multiple issues, an international trip to visit grandparents, many multiple allied health, and psychiatric appointments and a lack of appropriate medication in a foreign country. It would have been impossible for us to have completed the high quality plan which I was able to provide, in a 14 day time frame. I was particularly stressed as it was, and I cannot imagine the worry and harm it would have done to our family if either our registration was denied, or I was forced to complete the plan while unmedicated for my own conditions.

7. Consultation with the homeschool community was woefully inadequate. The businesses (not associations) that were consulted have a vested interest in the national curriculum being adopted, as many homeschool parents would feel obliged to purchase a package to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities. Key voices for the homeschool community were not only not consulted, but were actively denied a voice and consideration. The consultation that was claimed was prior to the existence of this bill, and as such, further consultation with the homeschool community is needed in relation to this bill.

8. The national curriculum should not be held as an example of a high quality education. The government has spent millions of dollars on reports and findings in relation to the underperformance of Australian children on an international scale. Literacy and numeracy levels are well below their expected levels, and there has nigh been an improvement in recent years. Many homeschooled children surpass the contents of the acara and are accessing tertiary education while their peers are still in formal schooling. There is no provision for this as an approved high quality education option in the proposed changes, A gross oversight, and once again, evidence that consultation with the homeschool community was inadequate.

“Queensland’s current home education legislative framework was reformed and established in 2006 under the EGP Act. Chapter 9, Part 5 of the EGP Act sets out the requirements and eligibility for home education registration. The Bill amends provisions under Chapter 9, Part 5 to ensure the EGP Act continues to provide contemporary support for quality home education, particularly given the steady increase in home education registration in recent years”

This amendment does not make provision for contemporary support. It simply demands an adherence to an underperforming guideline which is not suitable for the growing homeschooling population.

What has changed in the world since 2006, however, is the availability of information and resources to anyone who wishes to seek them. At our fingertips are seas of possibilities of information to explore, learn, play, seek, master.

Not only this, but forcing those who have chosen to invest in their children, for who they are, to attempt to teach them an array of information which may not be applicable to their lives? Once upon a time, when education was personalised, through childhood, a person's natural aptitude, and their own interests would dictate what they would learn. A future naturalist would spend their days in the woods, collecting and cataloguing, identifying miniscule features, and seeing the changes over time and seasons. An engineer would dutifully build and sketch, failing and succeeding, seek out necessary information from the relevant sources, and master the skills needed. This is what we seek to encourage in our children. Over time, they will acquire the universally necessary skills for participating in society - a well functioning understanding of the English language, and a basic comprehension of mathematics. However, this does not need to be accomplished at a pace set by a governmental institution. This can be acquired in the child's own time, as they are ready, and as needed.

If my incredibly intelligent 6 year old were to be attending school, or even have a parent homeschooling who was not as pig headed and steadfast as I, then she would be subjected to a constant, though likely inadvertent, message that she isn't good enough, she isn't smart enough, because her reading skills are not on par with what a document has laid out as appropriate. I however, know and impart in her that she is an incredibly clever and determined girl. That reading is a tough skill to learn, and when she is ready she will learn it. That all the things we do now, including those that cause frustration are the building blocks to a successful and loving relationship with the written word.

The curriculum is broken, it should not be applied in its entirety, to every child, and it should not be imposed on those who have actively sought out an alternative way to educate our children. People currently studying to be teachers are being told to use previous versions of the curriculum as humanities subjects still have not been finalised. There are far too many issues with the curriculum that tertiary educated teachers are unable to follow completely, and yet it is proposed that a parent should be able to interpret, apply and report on that curriculum.

It was reported in parliament that 20% of registered homeschoolers who were questioned (200) , about 40 families, use the national curriculum as a guide. And you know what, I did too. I opened it up, and I saw what was being taught at my daughter's level, and I assessed, with my intimate knowledge of her abilities, tolerance, temperament, interests and learning styles, and chose what to include in my plan. Her reading goals are below those her own age, but her comprehension and storytelling are years in advance. Her community participation, awareness of how she as an individual fits into the larger world, her understanding of sciences and nature, of cultures and diversity, is far beyond her years as prescribed in the national curriculum.

The HEU procedural document (version 5.2) states that

“The education program should show evidence of a high-quality education that:

- is responsive to the changing needs of the child as indicated by the short and long term educational and personal goals
- has regard to the age, ability, aptitude and development of the child concerned
- is conducted in an environment conducive to learning
- is responsive to the child’s need for social development
- utilises suitable and relevant teaching strategies to deliver the educational program to the child
- engages the child in a range of rich and varied learning experiences
- is supported by sufficient and appropriate resources
- uses strategies for monitoring educational progress.”

This is not only sufficient for the regulation of homeschoolers, but it far exceeds the quality of education that would be guaranteed by following the national curriculum.

9. If the government would like to expend incredible resources to both the HEU and home educating parents, shouldn't there be a justification for this? Is the public purse not being scrutinised by both the public and government officials?

10. If this is a knee jerk reaction to expose’s on cult practices recently in the media, or even the child death stats recently released, which made recommendations well out of turn, based on one child who suicided, who happened to be homeschooled, but had already been referred to child protection and mental health services, this was not a failing of the home education legislation, it was a failing of child safety and protection.