

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission
EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes in homeschooling legislation, particularly the requirement to follow a specific curriculum. As a homeschooling parent, I firmly believe that these changes would undermine the very reasons why many families, including mine, have chosen homeschooling as the preferred mode of education for our children potentially leading to an increase in mental health struggles.

As a parent of a neurodivergent child, we have spent hundreds of hours consulting with numerous specialists and allied health experts to determine how to best educate our child. We have liaised tirelessly with both of his former private schools to try to implement these recommendations over the past 9 years. Unfortunately, what my child required was just not able to be achieved by either school which resulted in a real hatred for learning, self-esteem issues and an unhealthy longing to fit in, no matter the cost.

My child learns best with a project-led learning style. This enables him to become deeply immersed in an area of interest and this will often cross at least 5 key learning areas. Adhering to the Australian Curriculum would render this impossible, as it has done so throughout his whole time at school causing him to fall a great deal behind and highlighting his differences to his peers. Being neurodivergent already means we stand out, our differences are noticeable, our confidence is diminished, and we feel like we are outsiders. What is the need to push and to force neurodivergent children back into following a fearful curriculum that holds them back and limits their potential and is your reasoning more important than a child's mental health? We are finally making progress with the learning style that we have found to be best for our son which has helped to increase his knowledge and improve his confidence and self-esteem. We are worried that if we are forced to go back to following the Australian Curriculum, then it will actually be a tremendous step backwards for our son which will then have the high potential of again lowering his self-esteem and causing mental health concerns.

Things have never been easy for our son, he tries so hard but struggles so much with comprehension which means everything he learns needs to be broken down into smaller parts with unlimited time for him to ask questions, grasp concepts and complete his work. At school following the curriculum he was doing double the amount of work as his peers as he was sitting through classes that he didn't understand, then coming home and sitting with us to go back over all of the work from the day. This caused him a significant amount of anxiety, as well as highlighted his struggles to his peers which resulted in him being seen as different, or in his very own words "Not Normal". The older our son became the more he realised he wasn't like others and the more he longed to fit in, he told us "if i just stand here quiet like this when im around people, then they wont know im autistic and will think im normal like them" .Watching our son withdraw further and further inside himself due to embarrassment and fear of being himself was heartbreaking and the last straw.

Well since starting our homeschooling journey, the clouds have started to clear and we have seen a different side to our son.

- We have seen strengths blossoming through out of nowhere.
- A massive boost of confidence shown by lots of info dumping to us parents accompanied with smiles, excitement, and pure happiness.
- A very obvious love for learning that's growing daily.
- An interest in Science and Physics that we never knew he had.
- An interest in setting goals to help him work towards pursuing a career in creative industries.

What warms my heart the most is that he is realising that it's ok to be himself and share his interests with others, even if it is just his stepdad and I at the moment, it's a positive start. All i have ever wanted is for him to feel as proud of himself as we are of him and I believe with building his confidence through individual based learning targeting his strengths, he will get there. He has come this far in such a short amount of time, imagine where he will be in a year. He is destined for great things, and I urge you to please reconsider this bill and allow my son the opportunity to continue learning the way he needs in order to persue his dreams.

The essence of homeschooling lies in the freedom it affords children to learn in a manner that aligns with their individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. By imposing a mandated curriculum, these proposed changes would impede my children's autonomy and hinder their ability to pursue education in a way that best suits their needs.

One of the primary motivations for homeschooling is to provide our children with a personalised learning experience that fosters their intellectual curiosity and allows them to learn at their own pace. These new regulations threaten to restrict this flexibility and stifle their natural inclination to explore and discover the world around them.

Furthermore, enforcing a standardized curriculum fails to recognize the diverse interests and talents of homeschooling students. It overlooks the fact that every child is unique and may thrive in different subject areas or learning environments. By imposing rigid educational requirements, we risk depriving our children of the opportunity to pursue their passions and develop their full potential.

In essence, these proposed changes would not only undermine the fundamental principles of homeschooling but also limit my children's ability to learn and grow in a way that honours their individuality and creativity. As a homeschooling parent deeply invested in my children's education, I urge the committee to reconsider these restrictive measures and instead focus on supporting families in providing a rich and diverse educational experience tailored to the needs of each child.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,
Nicole Borg

[Homeschooling Parent]