

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1778
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in relation to the proposed amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006.

I am a Certificate IV qualified veterinary nurse who worked for 10 years in both general practice and in an emergency and critical care facility. I educate my children at home and have done all their lives. I deeply value our freedom to homeschool in this state and I would like to share with you some of the ways that homeschooling offers benefits to our children that are not available in state school.

1. We can address difficulties and weaknesses almost immediately; recognising them, researching solutions and implementing new strategies promptly. For example, my daughter had been learning times tables by rote since grade two or three, but when it came time to use these in calculations involving multiplication, I discovered that my daughter could not recall these facts out of sequence. She could recite her tables by rote but if she was asked a multiplication fact like 4x8, pop quiz style, she could not recall it. After much research online and questioning other homeschool mothers, I settled on a resource called Times Tales. We used Times Tales® for about six weeks, in place of our usual math curriculum. Once she had mastered her multiplication facts, we picked up where we had left off. This was an excellent resource; very effective in helping my daughter to understand both multiplication and division and to help her remember her times tables. I was able to recognise this gap in her understanding and implement a solution quickly.
2. We can provide continuity in our children's education that no public school, teacher or Government mandated curriculum can provide. In our home, we have a number of examples of continuing projects, a couple of these are:

Geography/History: We have numerous large maps on display throughout the home; on these we have marked dozens of places from our books. Some of these are: the travels of Marco Polo, the journey of the First Fleet, the migration of the Vikings, the journey around Australia related in the book 'Are We There Yet?' by Alison Lester, the journey of Bourke and Wills, the exploration of Lewis and Clark and the hometowns of famous artists, musicians, scientists and inventors. The children find these places on our maps and mark them with sticky tabs/page markers. We write something simple on each tab, for example 'First Fleet, Cape of Good Hope, 14 Oct-12 Nov 1787', we mark every stop with the same colour tab and follow these journeys from beginning to end. We have done this since grade one. My daughter is in her sixth year of home education, my son in his third and we plan to continue this right throughout their schooling. As a result, they know more geographical locations (and the related history) than I knew when I finished high school.

History: When my daughter started grade four, we started an historical timeline to which we add people and events we read about. Each week the children choose a character or event that we have read about that they would like to add to their timeline. This is an ongoing project that enables the children to make connections they might not otherwise. They are able to see the contemporaries of each person we add to the timeline and the events that were going on around them. They notice the artists and composers each character may have liked and the inventions, wars, natural disasters etc that they may have witnessed in their lifetime.

3. We are able to provide a large array of educational excursions. These are just some of the excursions that we have enjoyed with other homeschooling families in our five and a quarter years of homeschooling

- Jacobs Well Environmental Education Centre (every year since grade one)
- Numinbah Environmental Education Centre - Guided Homeschool Excursion
- Hinze Dam – enjoying the H2O Kids learning program (linked to the Australian Curriculum), ran by SEQ Water, enjoyed with a group of homeschooling families
- A guided tour of Boggo Road Prison. Brisbane, Australia,
- A guided tour of St Helena Island National Park/Penal settlement. Moreton Bay, Queensland.
- A homeschool camp to see the turtle hatching in Bargara, including a visit to a recycling centre, a coral farm tour, fishing, an educational bush tucker walk and more.
- A tour of Tropical Fruit World. Duranbah, NSW
- A Tour of Madura Tea estates. Clothiers Creek, NSW
- Nasa – A Human Adventure. Space Flight Exhibition. Queensland Museum, Brisbane.
- Wolston Farmhouse – National Trust of Australia. Wacol, Queensland.
- Ipswich Art Gallery for various exhibitions
- Thunderegg Crystal Mine. Tambourine Mountain, Queensland.
- Beenleigh Historical Village & Museum – Guided Homeschool Excursion.
- Tamborine Mountain Heritage Centre – Guided Homeschool Excursion.
- Gold Coast Historical Museum - Guided Homeschool Excursion.
- Eureka (Gold Rush) Excursions - Guided Homeschool Excursion. Bahrs Scrub, Queensland.
- GOMA for various exhibitions.
- Queensland Museum for various exhibitions.
- World Science Festival for various activities. Brisbane, Queensland.
- Sailing for a term – Homeschool group booking.
- Numerous sporting events for homeschool groups, such as regular ice-skating, archery and soccer.
- Parliament house – Guided Homeschool Excursion. Brisbane, Queensland.
- Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary – Guided Homeschool Excursion.
- Honeyworld – Guided Homeschool Excursion. Currumbin, Queensland.
- First Aid Course (organised for a large homeschooling group - attended twice) – divided into groups for grades 1-4, 5-8 and 9-12

This is not all of the formal excursions (organised specifically for a large group of homeschooling children) we have attended, but it is some that are memorable. The above list equates to approximately five to six excursions a year. This is more formal educational excursions than most children at school are able to participate in.

Add to this their weekly swimming lessons, piano lessons, piano concerts, social meet-ups for Homeschoolers, family holidays, travel and social activities (none of which have been added to this list) and they have a rich and varied schedule of educational and social experiences.

The things mentioned above are just a few examples of how we can provide a high-quality education in our home. And our family is not unique among Homeschoolers. We have met hundreds of Homeschoolers throughout our journey, who put in an enormous amount of effort, time and money

to provide a high-quality education for their children. Homeschooling also provides a unique opportunity for the family to build a close bond, enabling the children to flourish. In the words of the British-American anthropologist Ashley Montagu “The family is the basis of society. As the family is, so is the society...”

I would also like to express my concern about the Education (General Provisions) and other legislation amendment Bill 2024. I am concerned that we, as home-educating families, are not receiving fair and equal treatment in the proposed changes to the legislation affecting homeschooling. My questions are these:

1. If we are required to report on all eight areas of the national curriculum, include two work samples for each subject and ‘demonstrate academic progress’ across all areas of our plan. **Will Queensland public and private school teachers also be required to provide this extensive and informative style of report to parents? And will teachers be responsible if some of their students didn’t make academic progress?** This is not a criticism but rather something I see as inequitable – it is unfair to legislate this for homeschooling parents when school teachers do not provide this. I currently submit a report that is far more extensive than any I, my husband, or anyone I know, ever received in a Queensland public school, which usually consisted of two or three sentences under each subject and a performance level.

Home schooling parents being required to report on all eight areas of the national curriculum, but proposing that only a small percentage of these reports actually be read, feels like disrespect for the substantial time and effort we devote to this task.

Could we report once every two or three years or can a more flexible arrangement of registration be implemented, such as registration ranging from 6 months to two or three years (similar to the model in NSW) at the discretion of the trained professionals within HEU, depending on factors such as experience and level of support needed. Can other methods of assessment be implemented such as zoom consultations with parents and children.

2. If schools are to be given 90 days in which to request transfer documents about a child when they move from another school, why will homeschooling parents no longer be allowed to apply for provisional registration? The current 60 day provisional registration, allows a new homeschooling parent time to research, prepare and submit a tailored education plan for their child. A child which they may be removing urgently due to serious bullying or mental health issues. During the public briefing on Monday the 18th of March 2024, it was quoted that removing provisional registration is to ‘promote continuity of learning’ (around 22 minutes in) so that they are ‘set up for learning from day one’. This seems to be arbitrary and not supported by research. Children in public school routinely take large breaks from formal education during school holidays. I frequently continue to educate my children throughout school holidays and on weekends, taking breaks when we want and/or need to, not necessarily during scheduled state school holiday periods. A child who is removed from school and has 60 days in which to slowly adjust to their new normal, while their parent formulates an education plan for them, should not be adversely affected by this ‘break’. Much informal learning can happen during this period and their education should not suffer, as the Christmas holiday period demonstrates. In the

homeschooling environment, we are not on a 9-3, five-day week. We often do year-round schooling, allowing us to achieve much while other families are 'off the clock'.

Could these families moving out of mainstream school perhaps be provided with support such as access to online lessons (such as were provided during covid) or a temporary curriculum to use for 60 days, while the parent is allowed the necessary time to research and prepare a plan for their child?

3. I am also concerned about being required to align with the Australian Curriculum. We have access to the Australian Curriculum and the activities designed around this (I refer to the Jacobs Well/Numinbah Environmental Education Centres and Hinze Dam Excursions that we have attended and that align with the Australian Curriculum). We appreciate access to this curriculum, however most home-educating parents provide a rich and diverse education for their children using a carefully curated list of high-quality resources from all over Australia and the rest of the world. They are able to engage their children with activities and subjects that their children are passionate about, unimpeded by the constraints of a Curriculum which would at times limit their choices. Research shows that outcomes for children who are homeschooled (regardless of the reasons for homeschooling or the style or method of delivery) are overwhelmingly positive (Ray, 2021). The reason for this positive effect is likely due to the interventions of the parent/s (Martin-Chang & Levesque, 2017), who love and care about them the most. Being personally invested in their future, we make the sacrifices needed and invest the time and money required, in order to provide a high-quality education, tailored to their strengths and interests.

I started our homeschooling journey using a 'packaged' curriculum from EUKA (then known as CEA). I chose this because it was 'designed to cover the Australian Curriculum'. We used this curriculum for one term; my daughter was stressed by the huge amount of writing required, I was mystified as to why every activity had a worksheet to complete as she was just five and was supposed to be learning to write her letters and not yet capable of filling in large quantities of worksheets. I also felt that it lacked the depth and richness that I was searching for. I abandoned this curriculum and spent an enormous amount of time researching options, methods and curriculums. I ended up finding a method that I liked and we have never looked back. It provides a depth and richness that I felt was lacking in EUKA's curriculum.

Our current education method includes the following things:

Poetry and recitation – Each day we read one poem from our chosen poet for the term and my children recite a poem and verse of their choice. They can recite beautiful poems, of substantial length, from memory, such as 'Clancy of the Overflow' by Banjo Paterson and 'The Wreck of the Hesperus' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Literature - We read a large selection of rich literature, classics, myths and legends, biographies of scientists, books on world history and science.

Mathematics - We use a fabulous mathematics curriculum from the United States. This is designed and presented by a Harvard educated teacher and has video tutorials with every unit. I give one-on-one assistance whenever necessary, ensuring that they master each concept before they move on to the next. This program includes a small number of units on imperial measurements. With the freedom to choose our own curriculum, I choose to encourage the children to complete these units

too. My husband and I have travelled extensively and been to the United States numerous times. It has always been useful to know the there are 3.8L to a gallon of petrol and that there are 1.6km to a mile and other conversions such as these. None of which they would learn if they were restricted to the Australian Curriculum. We also have the freedom to use resources that are presented by people with Masters and Doctoral degrees, giving our children an exceptional quality of education.

Handwriting/copywork – my children learn handwriting, cursive handwriting and do typing lessons.

Written narrations – after grade four my children are required to write a narration or oral composition of what they have read.

Music Theory – they do music theory every day.

Artist and Composer appreciation – we learn about one notable artist and composer each term and enjoy their work.

Piano – they play piano and regularly sit piano exams, both theory and practical and they perform in piano concerts such as the Yamaha Piano Festival.

LOTE – they both learn Spanish and have done since grade one. They will start a second language at the beginning of high school. My daughter has already requested to learn Australian Sign Language as her aunty is a NAATI accredited interpreter for the deaf. Having the freedom to design our own curriculum gives us the freedom to follow these interests.

Handicrafts – we learn a variety of handicrafts and the children show great attention to detail, pride in their work and well-developed fine motor skills.

Nature Journalling – we take regular nature walks/rides and observe and learn about as many local species of plants and animals as we can. The children paint and draw in their nature journals and make notes of their observations or any other details that they find interesting.

Extras such as swimming lessons, excursions and social activities. They also accompany me to all of the appointments and day-to-day activities that I engage in, educating them about, and preparing them for, life in the real world.

These are some, but not all, of the things that we learn each week.

We want to continue to have the freedom to choose what we teach our children and tailor their education to their specific needs and personality. We want to have the freedom to use high-quality resources from all over the world, recognising that Australia and the Australian Curriculum does not have the monopoly over knowledge and ideas. For many homeschooling families in Queensland, the requirement to align what we teach with the Australian Curriculum will require a large investment of our time, time which could be spent teaching our children. Many of us have an excellent routine and flow and we are having great results with our children's education, this will be disrupted by trying to change what we are doing. As the old adage says 'If it's not broken don't fix it'.

I am also concerned with the wording in Section 7 – insert – (da) for chapter 9 part 5 'home education of a child or young person should be provided in a way that – (i) is in the best interests of the child or young person taking into account their safety and wellbeing;'

My questions is this: who gets to decide what 'way' of home education is in the best interests of the child?

In conclusion I ask that you carefully consider these changes to legislation in relation to your responsibility to show respect for parental rights and their authority over the education of their children. As quoted in Article 26 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.'

Yours sincerely,

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In the event that my submission is published, please redact my name and contact details before publishing