

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Fwd: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024
Date: Sunday, 24 March 2024 11:55:01 AM

Dear committee

I am writing a feedback submission regarding the proposed Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I am currently a home education parent and I have concerns regarding the proposed legislation amendment and the impact it will have on the quality of education, as well as the quality of life, for all home educating families, current and future.

I am a neurodivergent parent and my home educated child is neurodivergent. Because of this, we both have different means of learning and working due to fluctuating capacity and our individual neurotypes. Some aspects of the proposal could have a direct and immediate effect on our daily life and the long-term outcomes in our home.

1. The proposed requirement to ensure all learning and reporting is based entirely around the national curriculum (ACARA).

* While I understand the need for the formal school systems across Australia to abide by a nationally decided standard, to ensure all children entrusted to this system are given equal opportunity to learn, the same principal cannot be expected to apply to children being educated at home. Children at home are afforded the right to be free thinkers long before children in formal school settings, and with this comes the ability to learn and grow tangentially rather than linearly. Allowing our home educated children to find the spark within the information they have and follow that in the direction they are most interested in is a huge reason many of us have chosen to home educate. So many children are processed through the school system being told they must learn this subject, but only this aspect and only in this particular way and only in this prescribed order, that they lose the chance to engage in free-thinking and questioning processes and authority. Then suddenly they finish high school and they are told they must think for themselves, get creative with their language or skills or ideas to ensure they get the chance to pursue anything further, such as university, work or adventures, but they find themselves lacking the skill set required to think broadly for themselves. Through home education, we allow our children to explore the topics they like best in the way they learn best, giving them the chance to find their own way early, and therefore preparing them for life's requirements. The suggestion that we must conform to ACARA says that not only is there a requirement for our children to only think in one way, but that we as responsible adults and parents also can't be trusted to think and teach in our own way.

2. The proposed requirements around reporting, both the need to report on every subject in ACARA for each report, and the allowance of government to request reporting outside standard reporting times with the HEU.

* Although some of the reports that I assume have been reviewed may seem short and sharp, there is a lot of work that goes into condensing vast amounts of learning in various ways throughout the year into such a brief synopsis. As our means of teaching and learning at home are different to those done in formal school settings, obviously the means of reporting will be different too. Many of our children are not required (or able) to complete standardized assignments and book work, therefore the standards expected to be presented by teachers in schools will differ from what we as home educators are able to show. Being able to present a 'standard' assignment completed to some degree by 25 children in one room will show varying levels of understanding, knowledge and ability, however a child at home who prefers to present their knowledge and ability through speaking or drawing

cannot be compared to the pile of writing sheets school students have produced. Our reports are created based on everyday observations, conversations and 'work' produced in various ways, then whittled down to one or two single examples of each of the three subjects we report on. This means we may have a photo of a grocery list or a shopping trolley, but from that we have extrapolated learning in the subjects of English, Maths and Social Sciences, and our role in reporting is to understand the learning outcomes and make it clear and concise for the HEU to recognize as a sufficient outcome for the one subject we are showing. Should we be required to report on all subjects in ACARA for each report, the extra work involved will mean many, many more hours for parents who are already often overworked with the mental load of running a household from home. I can't imagine a teacher being expected to look over an entire year's worth of learning for each child and compose a report based on each subject. They would never get the chance to teach anything, as all their time would be spent on reporting. The higher expectation parents who are not likely to be working outside the home and therefore may not seem as 'busy' as a teacher is outdated and dangerous - they are holding the mental load of the household which generally includes food shopping, planning and preparation; appointment booking and attendance; out-of-house activity management; learning ideas, research, planning and doing alongside the kids; and chores such as laundry washing, hanging, folding and putting away, dishwashing, dusting, vacuuming, washing, and keeping of track of when it is all done to in order to keep on top of it. Add to this the emotional management of ourselves while helping our children learn to manage their own constantly fluctuating emotions and it's already more than a full-time job. (And if they are working outside the home around daytime hours or sharing workload with a partner, all these things will simply be divided between both people including all aspects of the reporting.) With the current level of tracking, recording and reporting we are already doing, which seems to be providing plenty of information about how our children are learning and progressing considering we are all being given renewal each year, this should be a satisfactory outcome. Expecting anything more will be putting us at risk of having to choose between our time invested in our children and their learning, or creating more reports to demonstrate that learning - and from this I fear it would be a downward spiral as with less time invested in helping our children learn, how can we be expected to create more reporting content? And further, any expectation that we be available to provide a report at any time to government outside our usual reporting period will just add a whole other level to the workload I have described above.

3. The proposed removal of the 60-day provisional registration.

* For many of us, the choice to home educate is both a desire and a need. The desire is, in my case, to see my child/ren given every opportunity to flourish and learn happily in an environment where they are accepted and comfortable at a pace that suits them. The need is that the formal school system was not suitable for my child and was causing trauma that took several months to work past once they were at home. Many families are faced with a similar set of circumstances, and I consider those of us able to make the necessary changes to home educate as lucky. I am fortunate that at the time I made the decision that the formal school system wasn't right for my child, I was able to submit my application to HEU and upon receiving an email confirming the application was in place I could remove my child from school immediately and without fear of consequence (not that I fully understand the threat behind truancy towards children and parents, as we already have the moral and parental right to ensure the health and safety of our children above all else, but that is another matter entirely). Although my partner and I had been discussing this option for some time, the knowledge that we could begin the process immediately by removing my child from the school, and still allow ourselves time to learn about the planning requirements was essential. The stress I was already experiencing in seeing the decline of my child's mental health every day, in trying to communicate with the school to find a suitable solution, in trying to balance life with my younger children and what it would

mean with this change to schooling, was already a lot. The added requirement of having to create and submit a formal plan amidst all that, while still having to navigate the daily stress of both me and my child surrounding school would have seemed impossible - a daunting task that likely would have caused further delays to the registration request and the removal from the formal schooling system. Add to that the neurodivergent aspects that many of us bring to this process, and life in general, and something that may sound like a straightforward task to some becomes a winding road through a hurricane in a valley for many of us. Understanding the requirements, doing the research and creating an initial report is an enormous task in and of itself, especially for those of us who suddenly find ourselves racing an invisible countdown with an unknown and potentially harmful explosion at the end in the form of our suffering child/ren. Knowing I had the time to remove them from school and then dive into the plan creation was a huge relief. Should this provisional period be removed, we may find many children slipping further into the proverbial cracks in the formal school system while their parents are forced to grapple with the unfamiliar and complex process of creating their first home education plan. This will be a severe detriment to the child/ren, as well as the mental health of the entire family, and may in fact be a tipping point for families making the decision around their capacity to home educate their child/ren who could see this as simply too difficult to do at the same time. There should be no choice between prioritising our children's health and safety, our own mental health, and creating a plan. They are not mutually exclusive. As human beings, as parents, we should be able to ensure the health and safety of our children and ourselves are the priority, while still having ample time to complete whatever bureaucratic requirements necessary for every situation in our day to day lives. This includes the freedom to remove our children from formal schooling immediately while having the time to work both separately and conjunctively on their educational plan to ensure they are given the best opportunities moving forward.

As both a parent and an educator, I want my children to be the absolute best people they can be, now and for all their days. I want them to feel loved and accepted and cherished and intelligent, and most of all to feel like a complete human. Every day I strive to ensure this is their truth. I acknowledge that as much as we can teach them, as much as we can provide the information and the opportunities, it is all theirs to take as they want. We cannot force them to learn something, in some way, under some circumstances, if they are not willing and able to make the choice. Educating our children is about giving them the freedom to think about and understand everything around them, and to use that knowledge to think again. From my own school experience and that of my children, I believe that home education is the best way to ensure these outcomes for many, if not all, of our children. The changes I have refuted above will all make it harder to allow our children the freedom and flexibility they deserve to learn and grow and flourish, and it may prevent us as parents from having ample opportunity to afford them these things. I only ask that any changes to be made to the legislation surrounding the education of our children consider them as the priority above the expectations and requirements of the adults involved.

Sincerely,

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Home educating parent and advocate
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* Please ensure all personal information is removed before publication.