

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1789
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Publication:
Attachments: No attachment
Submitter Comments:

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April 8, 2024

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Attention: Committee Secretariat

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to express my opposition to the amendments proposed In the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendments Bill 2024. I can see that a good deal of work has gone into the generation of this Bill. However, as a former teacher with over 40 years' experience in NSW and QLD in both State and Independent school systems it is disappointing to read about these proposed changes which appear to have been formulated on the premise that home educators cannot be relied upon to educate their own children.

From my interactions, over the last 10 years, since I retired, I have met and spoken with many home educators who in my opinion do a competent and magnificent job. However, by proposing this Bill it now seems that the Education Department doesn't care what parents want or think regarding educating their own children. In democratic Australia unless there existed reasonable and conclusive evidence that home schools were 'failing', it seems a superfluous exercise to place them under demanding , unclear, and ill-defined regulations.

My understanding of the Bill is that there will be more stringent regulations applied to home educators than to teachers in schools. This situation seems improper and unfair. I believe that if the members of the Committee took the time to analyze why parents chose to home school their own children, they would certainly obtain a deeper understanding of the reasons home schools exist.

As I mentioned previously, I spent many years involved in education and it was obvious that 'schools' didn't suit every child and 'classrooms' were indeed not the places of learning that we all imagined they should be. Daily disruptions, the lack of discipline, teacher burnout, and a plethora of other reasons all contributed to this. From my observations this never really occurs in the functioning of a 'home school' where children are encouraged to from an early age 'play' which leads naturally onto self-education and the tackling of learning that suits their interests and needs.

I read with interest a report in the Courier Mail (Friday March 22) where it was evidenced that School Principals in QLD were under stress and often the target of violence and that “for the last decade and a half, kids haven’t achieved as much as they should, and the response is to bucket down on schools.” It is also clear from community responses in recent years that people currently feel that a massive amount is being poured into education in QLD but the results just don’t appear to justify this expenditure. Meanwhile, many parents have rejected the ‘state’ education system and chosen to commit to other forms of ‘schooling’, including home schooling their children, for a myriad of reasons. It seems strange that home schooling, a minority education ‘system’ in QLD, has become the focus of this proposed legislation, although given the ideology of many Governments to control religious freedoms, I suspect that there may be a hidden agenda amongst the current reasoning.

In conclusion, I therefore ask the Committee to intently focus its time and resources upon getting matters right in the school system that they can influence by maintaining a focus on improving the general behaviour and educational results of students under their direct care and responsibility. I also request that the Committee genuinely now reject this Bill as unnecessary because of the impost it would have on home schooling educators. It would seem appropriate that further investigations be made by the Committee into the structures and functioning of a range of home school models and if the proposed regulations are really needed. It would be advantageous for the Committee and representatives of home schooling to seek common ground to ensure that all interested parties feel that they have been suitably listened to and have had effective and meaningful consultation prior to divisive or intrusive decisions being made about the future of home schooling in QLD.

Peter