

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1794
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Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in our state. As a constituent and a member of the community, I believe it is crucial to voice my apprehensions about the potential impact of these changes on our education system. I am disappointed in the limited biased consultation and lack of understanding of the Homeschooling community by Di Farmer and the EGPA. I do not support the proposed changes.

I am a Home Educating Mother, I have four children, two of whom are out of school age now. We are a neurodiverse family. Each of my older children has a genetic DNA Deletion disability along with autism spectrum disorder. The older three have been in mainstream schooling when they were young, I was doing Teacher aid work with the idea to go into my Bachelor of teaching. However, after seeing the way the Education system currently stands, and the way it is not set up to help children, especially neurodivergent children, nor educate each child in the way they learn, I became quickly disillusioned with the schooling system and stepped out of it. My children continued for a time, but with extreme bullying, physical and emotional, the lack of adaptability and the one size fits all curriculum approach, I saw a MAJOR decline in my children's mental health and overall wellbeing. My youngest child is about to turn 8, and has never been in a school setting. He absolutely would not be able to handle that, nor would us following ACARA at home be in his nor my 16-year-olds

best interest. We, as parents have not lightly made the decision to home educate our children, it is not something that is undertaken without much thought and consideration, but it IS vastly the best option and in the very best interest for my children and so many others.

The proposed legislation raises many pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed. The main ones of concern are:

1. Forcing the following of the national curriculum, ACARA.
2. Reporting on more subjects than we currently do
3. Proving that home education is in the best interest of our child/ren
4. Removing the provisional registration period.

Home Education already offers a high standard of education, we already have our governing body, HEU, that we report to every year. The system is already overwhelmed, and one of the proposed changes is to have us follow the national curriculum, ACARA and report on all 8 subjects, currently we report on 3. HEU is already swamped and won't be able to meet demand for this, we as home educators are also already doing so much work, that reporting on this many subjects just takes away time from our job of educating our children. We are not afforded the same reporting options as teachers, to box tick. We must show TWO samples per subject and show how the child has made improvement in each. We also must explain how

we have taught and assisted and educated our child on each sample. It is a lot of work and increasing that is not in the best interest of anyone involved.

Homeschooling provides families with the flexibility to tailor education to the specific needs, interests, and values of their children. While some families may choose to follow the national curriculum as a guide, forcing homeschool students to strictly adhere to it is not ideal for a plethora of reasons:

1. Individualized Learning: Homeschooling allows for personalized, individualized learning experiences that can cater to a child's unique learning style, pace, and interests. Especially for neurodivergent children, that cannot flourish within the current curriculum. Needing the adaptability to learn where they are at, in a way that engages them. Forcing homeschool students to follow a rigid national curriculum limits their ability to learn in the way THEY need. Lessons taught to each individual in the manner that is best suited and tailored to THEIR individual needs.

2. Flexibility: One of the primary benefits of homeschooling is flexibility. Families may have reasons for homeschooling such as travel, religious beliefs, or specialized interests or needs that require deviation from the national curriculum. Forcing adherence to a standardized curriculum undermines the very flexibility that makes homeschooling the most viable and necessary option to many families.

3. Tailoring Education: Homeschooling allows parents to tailor education to address their child's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of need. They can provide additional support in areas where the child struggles or accelerate learning in subjects where the child excels. The rigid national curriculum does not allow for this level of customization which is absolutely necessary for neurodiverse learners. My high school ASD child can be doing math at a year 8 level, but English at a year 10 level which is meeting his needs where he is at. The national curriculum does not allow for this. Which is NOT in his best interest.

4. Different Educational Philosophies: Homeschooling families often have diverse educational philosophies, including approaches such as unschooling, Charlotte Mason, or Montessori. These philosophies may not align with the structure and content of the national curriculum. Forcing adherence to the national curriculum infringes upon families' rights to educate their children in accordance with their beliefs and values. Respecting Parental Rights, Parents have a fundamental right to direct the education and upbringing of their children. Forcing homeschool students to follow the national curriculum infringes upon this parental right and autonomy in educational decision-making.

Overall, the national curriculum does not work. It doesn't work in a school setting; it does not work in the home setting either. So many teachers have left the school system and home educate their own children and do NOT use ACARA. That speaks volumes. Forcing this one size fits all approach is only going to cause further learning problems for so many children and cause more people to go under the radar and deregister their children. My experience is with children with neurodiversity and

they must be advocated for to be allowed to learn at the pace and level, and in the way that best suits them, they have the right to do so in a safe environment at home.

Proving that home educating is in the best interest of our children. Who has the right to make this choice? Who and how do they decide upon this? This is a huge overreach into parental rights. One that is only going to cause people to deregister for so many of my above points.

Removal of the provisional period is ludicrous. As it stands now, one can leave the school environment, unenroll and enrol with HEU that day, HEU gives provisional 60 day registration, in which allows the parent/caregiver time to educate themselves and create the learning plan that will work for their child. This is so important. Many who have left the school environment have done so for quite extreme and severe reasoning, a child who has been physically assaulted MUST be kept home and protected as a matter of safety to their physical and mental wellbeing. This provisional period allows them to do this without repercussions of 'days absent' etc. It is vital and needs to be addressed and given the proper consideration it requires.

Moreover, I am worried about the lack of transparency and public consultation surrounding these changes. As a stakeholder in our education system, I believe it is imperative for the voices of educators, parents, students, and community members to be heard and considered in any decision-making process that impacts our schools.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritize the best interests of our students, and us as educating parents, along with HEU. I implore you to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policymaking that values input from all stakeholders that ensures the integrity and quality of our education system. I don't think anyone can argue that the current Education system is working, however removing parental rights and creating more work for us that home educate and enforcing curriculums that don't resonate nor work is not the way to go.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns. I look forward to your response and to further dialogue on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sky Burgess