

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Secretary,

I'm writing to you today to voice my concern to the proposed amendments for home education under the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

My main concern lies with the proposed amendment that parents will have to provide (the government) **reasons and adequate justifications** as to why Home Education is in the best interest of the child.

I am worried that if – the government – does not find certain reasoning adequate, will parents be 'forced' to place their children in the school system? Allowing the government to make decisions about what is in the best interests of each, and every child is teetering dangerously close to the **Stolen Generation**, whilst I am not an Indigenous Australian, I am absolutely sickened by that terrible part of our history and I cannot believe that there is a Minister in Parliament who would like to repeat those out-dated and horrifying actions. I feel that as a parent I am so ashamed of the government's actions back then and I won't stand to have ANY government in a country as great as Australia dictate to families what is in the best interests of children (aside from living in abusive households – of course).

My Husband and I have many reasons for choosing to Home Educate our two young children. As a Primary School teacher who has worked in Private, Public and Catholic schools since 2008 I am more than confident in saying that the school system does not suit the best interests of my children.

During my time as a primary school teacher and mother to my two older children, no longer school age, I have been disgusted with many factors relating to the school system, all of which have been instrumental in me choosing to home educate my two young children and not to return to work as a classroom teacher ever again.

Below are my main reasons for not wanting my children educated within the school system.

Teachers are overworked, stressed and under resourced – and in a lot of cases extremely inexperienced. Teachers have way too many factors to deal with in their general day-to-day. My last Year 3 class consisted of 25 students with 13 of these children on an Individual Education Plan – plans that took me hours to gather and justify evidence, prepare, implement, and report on. I found that I was spending large amounts of my break-time dealing with students that were being bullied, left out, or just anxious and stressed about being on the playground. There were far too many standardised tests and data collecting that at times the teachers were heard asking each other “when do I get time to just teach these students?” In the classroom more time was wasted with distractions and negative behaviours, along with needless assemblies and meetings.

At home my children receive a one-on-one education where we can focus on their strengths, weaknesses, and interests in a loving and nurturing environment. My two children are both performing above their individual comfort levels – I know where they lie regarding their skills, and I work to extend and challenge their abilities each day.

We follow the Australian Curriculum when working through Mathematics, English, Science and HASS... and I also follow their own individual plan for Creative Arts and PDHPE which is based on their interests.

Home education provides explicit one-on-one student to teacher attention each and everyday ... something that NEVER can happen in the school system. There are no outside influences, no negative distractions and there is no stress. The learning is fun, and the children are both thriving.

We are part of a community here in Hervey Bay both within the general community and the Home Education families. My children are also involved in real-life learning situations such as cooking and family life, along with taking part in extra-curricular activities such as Jiu-Jitsu, Dance lessons, boxing, soccer team and daily Bay walks with their peers.

The school system is rife with children who display extremely negative behaviour such as, and with influences from; terrible home life, lack of adequate parenting, social media, bullying and extreme peer pressure. Teachers are not equipped to deal with these situations and from what I hear in the community and through the media, they are only getting worse.

One of my colleagues is currently on leave as last year one of the Year 6 students (Year 6!!!) was on Snapchat showing the rest of the class the knife that he was planning on using in the classroom to KILL her with. The school principal and leadership team’s idea of handling this situation was to send his parents a letter outlining the situation. It was only when another parent took screenshots of the Snapchatting and insisted that this student be removed from the classroom did anything happen – and that action was

basically a slap on the wrist. This is one example of negative behaviours that I DO NOT want my children around.

Bullying. This is an issue that is extremely concerning to me as I have witnessed countless acts over the past 16 years both as a parent and a teacher. I honestly can say that if I were to seek professional medical advice, I would be diagnosed with PTSD from the bullying that my older son went through when in both the public and private education systems. Bullying that caused him to need extensive therapy sessions, and lead to extreme stress being placed on myself, his father, and our families.

My niece had to leave NSW and come and live with myself and my family in July-December 2023 due to the bullying and harassment that she suffered from Year 5 – Year 7 at FOUR different schools – catholic and public.

I absolutely in no uncertain terms will NOT place my two young children in a situation where they are at the mercy of bullies. I remember driving my older son to school and feeling so anxious each day that he had to attend, knowing that he was being subjected to physical, mental, and cyber bullying. I would have to hear night after night the torment that he suffered during the day and when calling the school, I would have to speak with an over worked and stressed Year Advisor who clearly had no way of dealing with these horrible students.

The school system as it stands failed my older son and his experiences have caused me extreme stress and anxiety, therefore I will fight for my right not to have that repeated. The school system is failing teachers who are expected to take on so many different roles in their day-to-day work environment that it is impossible for high quality teaching and learning to occur every day for every student.

High quality teaching and learning does however take place in my home each day for both my young children, therefore I don't see why on earth the government would want to remove them, or any other home educated children, from that.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where children are being abused and/or not receiving adequate care from their guardians. This is not a Home Education issue. This is a world issue.

Examples:

- [REDACTED] – where one of my colleagues works – fellow teacher: PAEDOPHILE molesting children in the CLASSROOM.
- [REDACTED] – where I attended school from Kindergarten to Year 6 in the 1980s– The Attending Priest: PAEDOPHILE.
- [REDACTED] – where my family and friends attended school in the 1990s – Attending Priest: PAEDOPHILE.
- [REDACTED] I grew up in when I was a child: PAEDOPHILE.

- The many friends that I grew up with whose parents were abusive all of which were in professional roles such as the police force, solicitors, and local shop owners... all children were in the school system.

I need not go on... my point here is that there have been cases of Home Educated children suffering at the hands of their parents, whilst this is infuriating and so sad it is not a standalone Home Education issue.

I am aware that other home educating families are writing in voicing their concerns regarding curriculum, reporting and the issues that I have raised. I know that there is not one way to please everyone. I am sure that if the education minister sat with Home Educators there could be solutions created that would begin us all on a path to suit all parties.

I would be more than happy for anyone to review the current learning plan that I prepared and implement in my home to educate my two young children. I believe that any interested party would align it to the Australian Curriculum and deem it serves the best interests of my children. I would also be willing to submit reports for each subject area, rather than the current requirement of English, Math and one other subject area, and even make comparisons between my own children's results and those who are educated in the school system. I would even be willing and more than confident for an observer to come into our home and view a day of home education in action (I would not allow this to happen though as it would be strange and unsettling for my children to have a stranger in their home and therefore that would not be *in the best interests of my children*.) I would be willing to sit with any interested party and consider solutions to these proposed amendments to assist in high quality teaching and learning is provided from all people involved in the education of children.

I will not, however, stand by and watch a terrible history (The Stolen Generation) repeat itself. We live in Australia, the greatest country in the world. I will not remain silent as the government attempts to remove the rights of parents to choose what is best for their children, especially when many of those parents are doing the right thing, and the best interests of the children are being served.

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to the concerns I, and others, have with the proposed changes.

Kind regards,

