

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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

Dear Committee,

Re: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislative changes to the Education Bill, particularly those impacting homeschooling families in Queensland. As a parent who has chosen homeschooling for my child, I am deeply concerned about the implications of these changes on parental rights, the quality of education, and the practicality of increased administrative burdens.

Guiding Principles and Parental Rights

The proposed guiding principles suggest a standard that undermines parental rights and imposes a one-size-fits-all approach to education. By questioning whether homeschooling is in the "best interest of the child," these principles fail to recognise the diversity of children's learning needs, interests, and abilities. Education is not a one-dimensional pursuit; it must adapt to the individual child, something that a bureaucratic standard cannot adequately measure. Moreover, the potential for bias and subjectivity in enforcing such standards raises significant concerns about fairness and equality.

Amid the unprecedented COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, which necessitated a shift to home-based education, I discovered more effective educational pathways outside the conventional school system. This revelation prompted me to embark on a homeschooling journey with our daughter in 2021, who was six years old. Since making this decision, I've observed her flourish in a learning environment tailored to her needs and interests. It's important to note that my daughter does not have any diagnosed learning or behavioural challenges; however, I firmly believe that the absence of such diagnoses should not preclude her or any child from benefiting from homeschooling. My primary concern with the proposed guiding principles is that they potentially marginalise families like ours—families who have chosen homeschooling not out of necessity but from a conviction that it offers a superior, more nurturing educational experience than traditional schools can provide.

Alternative Suggestion: Implement guidelines that support parental choice in education, ensuring that basic educational standards are met without infringing on the fundamental right to choose the most suitable educational path for their children. Creating a review panel comprising homeschooling parents and educators could also ensure any proposed standards are reasonable, practical, and inclusive.

Definition of High-Quality Education

The proposal to define high-quality education solely based on adherence to the National School Curriculum overlooks the inherent flaws within the curriculum itself. This curriculum has yet to meet the educational needs of all students, which is a driving factor for many families choosing homeschooling. Expecting parents to deliver such a curriculum without the professional training or resources available to teachers is impractical and neglects the unique learning opportunities homeschooling provides. Homeschooling thrives on the ability to tailor education to the child's interests and developmental stages, fostering a love for learning that a rigid curriculum cannot replicate.

Our daughter, now eight, thrives under a child-led learning approach, seamlessly integrating the key learning areas such as maths, English, writing, reading, and science —into her daily explorations. This method aligns perfectly with her learning capacity, eagerness, and developmental phase, fostering an innate love for discovery by granting her the liberty to delve into her passions. As her guide through this educational journey, I carefully maintain a balanced curriculum, ensuring she engages with a broad spectrum of subjects. Our primary goal is for her to sustain her enthusiasm for learning, cultivating a lifelong learner who is curious, well-rounded, and passionate about her pursuits.

Alternative Suggestion: Broaden the definition of high-quality education to include metrics that reflect a child's engagement, critical thinking skills, and overall development. This would recognise a variety of educational philosophies and methods, allowing for a more personalised approach that can adapt to the individual needs and interests of the child.

Increased Reporting Expectations

The proposed increase in reporting expectations for homeschooling families is concerning, especially given that these requirements surpass those placed on mainstream schools. Such measures not only put an undue burden on families but also raise questions about the practicality and necessity of these requirements, considering the existing administrative challenges faced by the Home Education Unit (HEU). Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence supporting the notion that increased reporting would lead to better educational outcomes for homeschooled children.

Over the last two years, every educational plan and progress report we've submitted has been approved without further details. These plans and reports have been effective for our family and significantly contributed to our daughter's thriving educational journey. She is deeply engaged in

her learning, excelling particularly in mathematics, English, reading, and writing. Moreover, homeschooling has allowed her to socialise in nurturing environments that are free from bullying and conducive to healthy interactions. She communicates confidently across different age groups, not limited to her immediate peers. This ability to interact broadly and express her unique identity is a direct benefit of the personalised and supportive environment homeschooling offers.

Alternative Suggestion: Streamline the reporting process to focus on meaningful educational outcomes rather than compliance with rigid standards. Implement a periodic review system that is supportive and constructive, aiming to foster educational improvement and address any gaps that respect parental autonomy and the child's individual learning journey.

In conclusion, while the intention behind the proposed changes may be to ensure a high standard of education for all children, the measures suggested need to recognise the unique benefits and flexibility that homeschooling currently offers. I urge the committee to consider these concerns and to work collaboratively with **homeschooling stakeholders** to revise the proposed legislation. Together, we can ensure that it supports the best interests of all children without imposing unnecessary burdens on families who choose homeschooling.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,
Sheree Fletcher

