

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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To the Committee,

I am a Secondary Teacher and Head of Vocational Education and Training in a private Brisbane school in which I have been employed for over 20 years. I recently completed a Graduate Certificate in School Leadership and Management, and am now completing a Masters of Education.

My Background and Experience as a Teacher

My wife and I were not planning to home educate our children as we are both Queensland trained and registered teachers, who always valued education and believed in the mainstream system. However, our faith in the system gradually dwindled over the years as we witnessed firsthand the ineffective curriculum with a one-size-fits-all approach. Over the years, there have been numerous updates and overhauls of the curriculum, none of which made any obvious positive difference. In fact, literacy and numeracy rates of students have continued to decline and is at an all-time low. Additionally, teachers find themselves in a position where they are expected to teach an exorbitant amount of content in minimal and unrealistic timeframes with no leeway to support struggling students in fully comprehending the concepts.

My Children's Experience in Mainstream School

Despite our misgivings, we enrolled our own children in mainstream schooling. After a few years, the cracks began to show. By the time they were in Year 5, they could not read an analogue clock, problem solve, recall basic number facts, read and comprehend proficiently, and spell with age-appropriate accuracy. This was all the result of a '*high quality*' education under the Australian curriculum! One child suffered from significant anxiety and another with undiagnosed ADHD. It was no wonder they were beginning to fall behind and hated learning!

The Benefits of Home Education

Fast forward to the present day after more than two years of home education. Our anxious child is calm and controlled, with extensive time available to process situations, emotions and stressors. Her increasing confidence has allowed her to gain part-time employment, attend social groups and participate in various sporting clubs. She is excelling academically without the pressure of comparison or fear of embarrassment and with sufficient time required to

learn and master each concept before moving on to the next. Our other child was displaying signs characteristic of ADHD with inattention and hyperactivity issues, and was diagnosed after extensive testing. She is now also thriving in the home education setting, where lessons and tasks are tailored to her needs and learning style. Family and friends who have known and loved our children over many years frequently comment on the drastic positive change they see in them since homeschooling.

The Personal Investment of Home Educating Parents

This decision came at a high cost. My wife resigned from her teaching position to home educate our children full time, which means we have been living on one income for the past two years. Although this has been difficult with the rising cost of living, we do not regret our choice in the least. Our children are thriving academically, socially, emotionally, mentally and physically, we are connected as a family and enjoy learning together. They have more time to engage in various learning programs including art, engineering, woodwork, musical theatre, instrument lessons, dance and sports. Families who make a decision like this and happily accept the high cost involved personally and financially, are people who are genuinely invested in their children's education. Understandably, there may be the few cases where parents are not engaging their children with acceptable learning programs and not delivering the quality education every child deserves, however let's not throw out the baby with the bath water! The majority of home educating families are providing their children with an equivalent, if not better, education to that which they were receiving in mainstream school, and that is without adhering to the Australian curriculum. This should be celebrated and perhaps, dare I say, investigated to determine why it is working so well!

Enforcing Adherence to QCAA Standards for Home Educating Parents

The bill aims to ensure home educators comply with QCAA standards for secondary students in their planning and implementation of curriculum. This is unrealistic and unprofessional. The curriculum was developed for teachers in the mainstream school setting. Teachers are trained to understand and implement the curriculum over years of university study. Even in a school setting like my own, it is the Administration, Heads of Department and Subject Coordinators who are responsible for writing programs aligned with the curriculum and ensuring these are implemented by teachers. How can any untrained parent be expected to do the same? And yet, although these parents are 'untrained' when it comes to the curriculum, they are the experts on their children. They know their children's interests, abilities, learning

styles, strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, etc. They source, learn and implement educational programs in the best interest of their child. I may be a 'trained teacher', but I am often learning a great deal from these 'untrained' home educators!

Evidence for Requirement of ACARA-based Education in Accessing Future Pathways

Every day, I am working alongside students in the mainstream setting, assisting them in finding and completing Vocational Education pathways for their future careers. I have seen evidence to support the fact that there are multiple pathways students can take in order to gain entry into university courses without completing an education in adherence to the Australian curriculum. By completing relevant certificate courses, a student's ranking (or equivalent ATAR) can be sufficient to access a broad range of trades, courses and university degrees. Universities also offer bridging courses to assist new students to gain the necessary understandings required to complete a particular degree, effectively filling in any gaps in a student's education, whether they be mainstream or home educated. I have personally worked with one homeschool student who did not study under ACARA. He is now enrolled in a Physiotherapy course at a Queensland university and is achieving at distinction level. So why should home educated students be forced to learn according to the national curriculum?

Overreach of Government Power

Finally, I would like to pose a question: *Do you believe the Government has the right to tell parents how to raise their children, to force law-abiding citizens to comply with their demands detailing how a child should be educated with no understanding of that child and their individual needs?* The changes this bill recommends stem from the belief that Government has the right to decide what a high-quality education involves, whether children are eligible to be home educated, and remove the rights of parents to make key decisions for and with their own children. It is a complete overreach of their power.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for your time in considering this submission and urge you to vote on behalf of the thousands of families and individual students this bill negatively impacts.

Sincerely,

Brynley Sadler