

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Leanne Thomas
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Leanne Thomas, [REDACTED]

Please find submission herewith:-

Dear Committee Members

I am writing in response to the proposed changes to the education legislation that have been proposed for my State.

In particular I am opposed to the recommendation that parents have to plan and report on all subjects consistent with the Australian Curriculum. The most essential subjects for a successful life are English and Maths and other subjects are often areas of interest and not undertaking those subjects through schooling will not necessarily disadvantage a child. Home Schooling parents already have a huge workload and have made personal sacrifices to undertake home school and personally I find it difficult and stressful to prepare the end of school year reporting in its current form.

The proposed decision to remove provisional registration will be a disadvantage to parents as some parents have no choice but to remove their child due to an unsafe environment at school and need time to collect themselves and their thoughts and organise a curriculum once they have made the decision to pull their child from school for their safety or for any other reason.

Who makes the decision whether home schooling is in the best interest of the child? No government or government representative should have the power to make this decision. The parent knows the child best and personally I have weighed the decision greatly and also consulted my child as to whether to home school and then whether to continue to home school and after many years of children in the "school system" have decided to home school for many and varied reasons and my daughter known as S is happy, enthusiastic and thriving doing home school and doesn't feel like she is missing out on anything by not having to attend "an institution".

I feel that there has been a lack of consultation with the home schooling community and parents in regards to these proposed changes. I feel that as a parent I know my child best and have the best interests of my child at heart. I know my children so well, when I give them a choice between two options for example "chicken" or "fish" I almost always already know what option they will choose before they make their choice. The decision to home school our youngest was the result of much deliberation and I decided it was in the best interests of my child to no longer avail ourselves of the suffocating "school institution" and to undertake home schooling which is something I did consider for my oldest child but felt unable to do at the time.

As a mother of 3 girls, the oldest aged 22, I feel I am well situated to have a valid opinion on how both traditional schooling and home schooling worked/works for my children. My eldest who shall be referred to as "T" struggled with academics and social interactions at her school from Grade 3 onwards and at the end of Year 5 received an Asperger's diagnosis. She struggled particularly with reading at school despite being introduced to reading at a very young age with stories read nightly at bedtime and library shelves full of children's books for her to read. I did not teach her to read myself as I believed that the school was teaching her from Prep age but we did the homework and "readers" that the school sent home to support her learning. Eventually we hired an expensive tutor for a time to work with her to help her with reading but the school was basically unhelpful and her Year 4 teacher told me that she would always struggle and

never went to any effort to offer additional help or remedial learning at school or even advice on how we could support our child academically.

In Grade 5 T was humiliated by her teacher who would read out her poor results in front of the other students and later in the year made her stand up in class and told her she was being kept down the following year. I had to contact the Head of Primary because of this and was told that this was not in fact the case and T was not being kept down. Even though there was only a few weeks of school to go, I asked for T to be removed from that teacher's classroom as I no longer felt that my child was safe with her and T spent the last few weeks of school with the Head of Primary giving her school work. T has gone on to successfully complete Grade 12 but it was an uphill battle. She was often stressed with her school workload, homework and assignments. Her school-related anxiety caused her to verbally lash out at us before and after school and for home to not feel like a safe place for us at times.

T subsequently completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood and works as a early childhood educator and is currently studying for her Diploma. She is able to successfully work with difficult children as she understands and relates to them having been a "difficult child" herself.

As I had witnessed the failing of the school to properly teach "T" to read, which I thought put her at a great disadvantage, I decided to teach "A" to read before she started Prep and purchased resources and also created my own. As a result A was able to read simple books before she entered Prep. Her Prep teacher did not support her advanced reading level and refused to loan her advanced reading books that matched her reading level so I borrowed them from the town library. A went onto excel academically at every grade level achieving the highest marks overall for Grade 1 and highest or second highest marks for the rest of her school career culminating in achieving Dux for Grade 12 in 2021. She also was the lead in the school musical and held down a part time job while studying for her senior certificate. A chose not to go to University despite her excellent academic results and is currently employed in an administration role for a Media Company and is planning future studies in graphic design.

In 2022, after many years on the regular school "round-about" we made the decision to homeschool our third child S for a number of reasons. S could be described as a slightly above average student who lacks focus but enjoys creative story writing, piano and art. This year S is on her third year of home schooling and is happy and thriving. Before the start of the new school year she was given the choice to go back to "regular school" but she decided she was content to keep doing home schooling. Home schooling gives her the flexibility to do activities that we would not be able to do otherwise such as out of town art classes, craft activities and piano lessons. She is also not bogged down and stressed by homework and assignments and can learn at her own pace and take breaks when she gets tired or overwhelmed.

Quite a few parents tell me that I am very brave doing home schooling as they would not have the time or patience to do it but we find it works well for our child and I feel extremely anxious that our freedom to home school in the way we believe is best for our child is under threat with the proposals to be put to parliament. I don't believe that home school needs any extra red tape and that the system as it is works and has worked well for years. We personally know of a few families who have home schooled their children and they are all successful, well adjusted members of society who are gainfully employed.