

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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To the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee.

I am writing to object to the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Bill 2024 in the current form. I have specific concerns with the implications of Clauses 18 and 68 and am in support of the Free2homeschool Movement.

This will have a direct impact on restricting homeschooling families in their freedom of choice when it comes to educating their children, therefore having a detrimental effect on thousands of children across the state.

I was an only child fully educated and socialised by the state education system. I have successfully homeschooled 4 children to adulthood, and I can assure you that they are far more successful, confident, intelligent, logical, thoughtful, mature, well socialised adults than I was at their age.

My main concerns is based on the fact that Clause 18 conflicts with Clause 68. Clause 18 states that “education should be provided in a way that— (i) provides positive learning experiences for children and young people; and (ii) promotes an inclusive, safe and supportive learning environment for children and young people; and (iii) recognises the educational needs of children and young people of all abilities and from all backgrounds; and (iv) recognises wellbeing as a foundation of educational engagement and outcomes for children and young people [and that] education of a child or young person should be provided in a way that— (i) is in the best interests of the child or young person taking into account their safety and wellbeing; and (ii) ensures the child or young person receives a high-quality education”

Let’s be honest, we all agree with that. All genuine homeschooling parents want an education that’s in the best interest of their child, recognises their individual needs and provides positive learning experiences in a supportive learning environment. That’s why they chose to homeschool. The HEU already rigorously assesses and monitors that this is happening.

Clause 68 goes on to say that the educational program used must “be consistent with an approved education and training program ... approved education and training program means— (a) the national school curriculum (known as the Australian Curriculum)— (i) developed and administered by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority established under the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008 (b) a senior subject syllabus for a senior subject; or (c) a vocational education and training course at level 1 or above under the AQF; or (d) a combination of the curriculum, a syllabus or a course mentioned in paragraph (a), (b) or (c). senior subject see the E(QCAA) Act, schedule 1. senior subject syllabus, for a senior subject, means the syllabus for the subject developed by the QCAA and published on its website. syllabus see the E(QCAA) Act, schedule 1”

The implication here is that only education programmes approved by the Queensland Government meet the standards set out in Clause 18. Does the Queensland Education Department really think that they hold some kind of global monopoly on what constitutes a quality education? How on earth did we, as a human race, achieve all the global advances in knowledge prior to the Queensland Government producing curriculum? Societies across the world have produced many great thinkers without the help of the Queensland

Government. Consider the ivy league and English universities for example. There are plenty of other educational programs that are equivalent (or superior) to those produced and approved by the Queensland Government, and home educators should be allowed to use these if they so desire.

A corollary to this way of thinking is that the “approved education and training programs” as defined here work for all children. A consequence of this is that many institutional educators believe that all children can be shoehorned into a successful education (provided they use the Queensland system, I imagine.) I challenge you to listen to the submissions you are receiving. I imagine you will receive many from parents of neurodiverse children with mental health issues, describing how school was traumatic for their children and how much better they are doing being homeschooled. Just last week I meet a grandmother homeschooling her grandson, who has a trauma background. Although she said the local state school was excellent and supportive, her grandson was anxious, not learning, and having violent tantrums at home due to the stress of attending school. His school education did not recognise wellbeing as a foundation of educational engagement. His grandmother did and acted appropriately, removing him from school. He came under mental health care, and the doctor recommended she do no study with him whatsoever for at least a year. Now he is a lot calmer, has graduated from mental health care and is starting to take an interest in learning. Do you really think these positive changes would be happening if he was still being hammered with the Australian Curriculum, and expected to keep up with it? I did have a friend who forced her sweet young struggling son to stay in a state school. He is now a delusional recluse glued to his computer in the basement. You need to allow parents to choose an educational program that works best for their children, to ensure their children become confident adults who can function in society. On the other end of the spectrum, you need to allow parents who want to take their children to a much higher academic level than the Queensland Curriculum allows, to do so. Some of my children have studied maths to university level while still at high school, which meant my son did very well at university studying engineering.

Has the Queensland Government based the development of this legislation on any published academic study of the performance of homeschooled students, particularly comparing outcomes for students suffering from mental health issues with those who remain in the state schools? If not, why not? Or is this legislation just a kneejerk reaction to the increase in homeschooling numbers? I’m sure the HEU is doing a fine job assessing and monitoring homeschoolers: are they claiming that the standard of home education they are seeing is inadequate?

Clause 18 states that “home education of a child or young person should be provided in a way that— (i) is in the best interests of the child or young person taking into account their safety and wellbeing”. Why is home education singled out here? Should not state education also be provided in this way? Is the Queensland Government providing education through its state schools that “[takes] into account [children’s] safety and wellbeing”? Are the Queensland Governments efforts to achieve this actually successful? Is anyone measuring the “safety and wellbeing” of children in state schools? Can all parents say that their child is free from ongoing bullying in the Queensland state school system? I doubt it. Who will decide if the education provided is in the best interests of a child? It should be the parents, who know the child best, and have to put up with negative behaviour caused by the school environment or curriculum. (Maybe you have some lazy parents who aren’t providing an adequate education, but as mentioned before, I’m sure the HEU is doing a good enough job monitoring this.)

Finally, these modifications to the legislation are going to cause a ridiculous amount of administrative work for both parents (drawing them away from educating their children)

and HEU staff (drawing them away from investigating cases that really do need attention). Of course you could allocate extra funding to the HEU to achieve this – or you could put it into helping the many children struggling in the state system. For example my young bright physically disabled friend Maia, still struggling with reading at age 11, heading to high school next year. Go help kids like her instead of making life harder for parents who are doing a good job teaching their children.

Kind regards,
Frances Peeters

