

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Homeschooling Legislation
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Catherine Payne
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Greetings committee members.

I am writing in response to the proposed education bill impacting home educating families. I understand what the bill is attempting to achieve and agree that all students deserve a high-quality education, I do however, disagree that forcing the Australian curriculum is in the best interest of home educated children and so I do not approve of the proposed changes.

I am a mother of 2 children and have been educating them at home for the past 4 years since the beginning of their schooling journey. When we registered for home education we committed to providing a high-quality education under the approval of the home education unit. We are instructed to create an individualised plan for each child considering their needs, interests, learning style and any extra hurdles they face. The success in homeschooling comes from the freedom and flexibility to match an education perfectly to each child by the people who know them the best and want to see them thrive- their parents. We are able to engage in high quality learning by following their interests or aligning our learning schedule with the abundance of rich experiences available to us. We have many examples of this happening from just a few short years so far, but i would like to share just one. Last year, I was able to take my 2 children on a trip through New South Wales and down to Canberra. We made a lot of stops and sought out many learning experiences along the way. We prepared for the trip by learning about many topics we would come across in depth, so we could maximise our engagement with opportunities and experience as we travelled. This included maps, geography, land features, cartilaginous fish, government, caves and geology, specific bird species and their habits, architecture and town planning, Australian history, ancient history and more. The kids were also involved in budgeting and the logistics of the trip. On the trip they were able to engage well and hold conversations with experts in many fields, growing their knowledge further, as well as their passions. The learning was deep, practical, rewarding and meaningful. It has been remembered and the ideas learned continue to be engaged with as they build on knowledge in other areas and continue to make connections and links between all topics in the world around them. This was a high-quality educational experience despite not being aligned with the Australian curriculum. We spent a few months delving into these topics and I am concerned that being required to strictly follow the Australian curriculum will mean saying no to some of these opportunities and learning tangents, only to replace them with required learning that falls flat because the interest is not there at the time they are required to learn it.

My other main concern with the curriculum in general is the way it forces children to learn specific skills by specific ages which causes a great deal of stress to children who may not be developmentally ready for that skill yet. I see the impact these schedules have on the mental health of many young children, starting as young as 4 years old as they enter prep, causing sometimes debilitating learning anxiety. While I understand the necessity for a streamlined schedule in schools, there is no reason to hold homeschooled students to the same strict timelines. When given freedom, children learn effectively, efficiently and with enjoyment and confidence when they are ready. My son would have been behind in reading during his prep year. He was not interested but we allowed him time and didn't push him. When he was ready, he read through 6 levels of his early readers in one afternoon and onto chapter books a couple of weeks later. By the end of grade 1 he could

read anything as well as I could including complicated scientific language. Reading is now a big part of his life, and he finds great pleasure in it especially reading non-fiction to learn more about his interest topics. I worry what would have happened if we had have pushed when he was not ready. I expect it would have created resistance and anxiety in place of his beautiful love of reading which is now one of his favourite things to do and the source of a lot of his self-directed learning. I worry for my daughter who is just starting her schooling journey and what these proposed changes will mean for her as well as my son as he continues through primary school.

We are called to provide a high-quality education and I believe we are already doing just that. The Australian curriculum is mediocre at best with little evidence of success even in a formal schooling environment and leaves me concerned for the mental health of our youngest generation as well as their relationship with learning.

I am aware that some families may keep their children home unregistered and the children suffer greatly as a result. This is an issue I am greatly passionate about, however, I do not believe the proposed changes will impact the children that would benefit most from the changes, but only families who are already doing the right thing and working with the home education unit to provide a supervised education. While I would hope people do the right thing, it may even disincentivise parents from registering their children with the home education unit, leaving their children vulnerable to educational neglect. I don't believe that children who have fallen through the cracks of the current system will be helped by these proposed changes.

As a home educating family, we haven't just opted out of traditional schooling, we have wholeheartedly opted in to a life rich with quality learning, shaping the very essence of our life and family around our commitment to providing a high-quality education to our children and we are seeing our children thrive. You have trusted us to do this until now, and I hope that you will continue to trust us in future. We know the little hearts and minds that live in our home better than anyone else, and we know what it means to be well educated. In combination with the abundance of resources at our fingertips I believe home educators are and will continue to do a fantastic job without the shackles of the restrictive and bland Australian curriculum to hold us back. We are able to do this under the system already in place that provides ample oversight and supervision from the home education unit. To best serve our children, we need the freedom and flexibility to do what is best for them and give them a high quality, individualised education that is perfect for the person they are now and who they are becoming.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I hope our community will be heard and considered in the decision regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

Catherine Payne